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A CASE STUDY OF PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE IN AN ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM

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BY

YVONNE WALMSLEY

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ABSTRACT

This is a case study of a "situation-approach" program in adult education: a non-credit, evening program designed for women who were considering some kind of life change by either returning for further education, re-entering the labour force, or changing careers.

The specific research purpose was to describe, from the participants' point of view, the experience of adult learners in such an educational program which attempts to link educational endeavour directly to the various life situations in which adults find themselves. It was proposed as a contribution to that research in adult education which, using qualitative research techniques, focuses on the educational process from the point of view of the adult learner.

The study was based on five months of field research using techniques of participant-observation and in-depth interviews with the nine participants and course instructor. Details of methods of data collection, recording, and analysis are provided.

Analysis of the data suggested that the participants' experience in this particular program could be characterized as an encounter of perspectives - the personal, pragmatic perspective of the participants encountering the abstract, academic perspective of the instructor embodied in the course curriculum.

This major descriptive theme - an encounter of perspectives - is used to order the description of the participants' experience with data being presented to illustrate its sub-themes. A sense of the narrative flow of the experience is provided through a chronological account of the class sessions and the interviews held with the one

participant interviewed most frequently and regularly.

The results of this analysis are considered as they serve to illustrate two, key theoretical and practical issues confronting adult educators who attempt to implement a "situation-approach" program strategy: How can the concept of needs serve as a basis for program design? What is the role of the instructor in structuring such a learning process? These are briefly discussed with reference to the implications of this particular case study.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE NATURE OF THE STUDY

1. BACKGROUND

My decision to carry out this particular study came at a time in my graduate studies when my interest in the "situation approach" to adult education programming converged with my introduction to the strategies and theoretical premises of qualitative research methods.

The "situation-approach" refers to designing adult education programs around the immediate and real-life "needs" of the adult learner in contrast to the more traditional "subject-matter" approach. It is exemplified by an increasingly large and varied number of programs which are geared to the adult in specific life situations; for example, being newly divorced or widowed, changing careers or planning retirement.

Such programming has received impetus in the past decade by the increasing currency of the notion of "lifelong learning" (Lengrand 1970) and the concept of "developmental tasks" drawn from life-span psychology (Cross, 1981; Gleazer, 1980; Weathersby, 1976). But as a programming strategy it was first described and advocated more than fifty years ago by Eduard Lindeman in his influential book, The Meaning of Adult Education:

> "The approach to adult education will be via the route of situations not subjects ... Every adult person finds himself in specific situations with respect to his work, his recreation, his family life, his community life, etcetera - situations which call for adjustments. Adult education

> begins at this point ... The situation-approach to education means that the learning process is at the outset given a setting of reality."
>
> (1961:6)

I was intrigued with the situation-approach as a design principle and programming strategy. I shared the belief that education should provide personally relevant learning experiences. But it was the process by which this was accomplished that I wished to better understand - especially when that process was placed within the context of a formal program.

In practice, how did this process work? What was it like for the adult who goes to a class in which educational activities will presumably assist him or her to address life situations in some meaningful way? What were the connections between the spheres of classroom and daily life as they were construed by the adult learner?

These questions remained only general in nature and I did not consider them a basis for further study until I was introduced to some of the educational research using qualitative methods. Studies by such researchers as Cusick (1973); Becker et al (1968); Mezirow, Darkenwald & Knox (1975) and Wolcott (1973, 1977) not only struck me as interesting and useful in their insights but the frequently recurring idea in this literature - to understand from the point of view of the actor - was precisely what I wanted to know about adult learners in situation-approach programs.

Furthermore, as I read more about qualitative methodologies and the theoretical premises they incorporated (Blumer, 1969; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; McCall & Simmons, 1969; Schatzman & Strauss, 1973), I became aware of how these better accorded with my own assumptions. I was certainly more comfortable with the notion that man's actions could be understood as flowing from his active construction of meaning rather than the more mechanistic, reactive conceptions of behaviorist approaches. In Schatzman and Strauss' words I had already "opted" for a "naturalistically-oriented humanist" orientation (1973:5) and that had definite implications for my choice of research methodology.

Qualitative research thus gave me a theoretical basis, conceptual leverage, and a research strategy which focused my interests in a substantive area of adult education programming and allowed me to translate my general questions into a researchable statement.

2. PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to describe, from the participants' point of view, the experience of adult learners in an educational program designed specifically to address decision-making in a life situation.

Three initial, exploratory questions were used to guide the research:

1. How did the participants define their situation as they entered the class?
2. How did they interpret the events or activities in the class?
3. In what ways did they relate their participation in the class with their life situation?

The initial questions guiding this research formed an orientational framework which, consistent with my own theoretical understanding of human behavior, allowed a means to enter the field and focus my observation and interviews at the beginning stage of research. (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973:9)

Essentially the theoretical framework within which I worked was one which described human action as arising out of an ongoing, interpretive process of defining situational elements, giving meaning to them, and constructing action. This definitional and interpretive process is guided by the actor's perspective - "the outline scheme, which running ahead of experience, defines and guides it." (Janesick, 1981:2)

To describe the participants' experience meant that I must, of necessity, immerse myself in their situation and attempt, through a combination of participation, observation, and interviews, to understand that situation from their point of view.

My selection of such a field research site was fairly open, given the number of situation-approach programs offered by the adult or continuing education agencies in the city. My eventual choice of one program was based primarily on three criteria: (1) whether the nature of the program corresponded with the situation-approach previously defined; (2) whether I could comfortably participate in such a program; and (3) whether I could gain access to the situation with the clear understanding of my research intent.

These criteria were met by one program which had been offered in the city for some ten years; a course designed for women who were at a point in their life when they were considering some kind of change: either returning for further education, re-entering the labour force, or changing careers. It was explicity based upon the situation-approach. It had a history which suggested that it had had some success in the continuing education marketplace and it was the kind of course which I could enter comfortably as a participant since my own career path was one of some concern to me at that time. Finally, I was able to negotiate entry on overt terms as a researcher as well as a participant. (The actual process of gaining entry is detailed in Chapter Two).

This study, then, was based on field research using techniques of participant-observation and in-depth interviewing over a five month period during which the class met weekly for three hours a night for ten weeks. I attended each session as a participant-observer and interviewed the other participants and instructor outside of class time. The extensive field notes and interview transcriptions accumulated over this five month period became the raw data for this study.

3. RELEVANCE TO ADULT EDUCATION RESEARCH

Adult Education Research Trends

Although the practice of adult education has been well-established in North America for most of this century, it is a relatively new field of study with the majority of graduate programs only having been established in the sixties. It is thus a "fledgling field" and a field of study and practice characterized by its diversity, its multi-disciplinary foundations and the practical pressures of an applied profession with marginal status and funding. (Long, 1980)

Successive reviews of adult education research have highlighted the difficulties of establishing an empirically tested body of knowledge which could form the basis for theory and practice in this field. (Bittner, 1950; Brunner, 1959; Kreitlow, 1970; Long, 1980).

In the most recent of these reviews, prepared for the latest Adult Education Handbook series, Long (1980) discusses some of the trends and issues in adult education research over the past twenty-five years. In his view the research has progressed since World War II from reports based on personal experience to status reports and descriptive studies relying heavily on survey instruments. Many of these he characterizes as of "limited generalizability and application" principally because of "inadequate research designs." (1980:17) Within the past decade, however, he finds an increased attention to more sophisticated research design and methodologies and foresees in this trend an indication that adult education research will be of better quality and value as its methodological rigor is improved.

While Long greets positively the fact that some adult education researchers have begun to incorporate more complex techniques of quantitative data collection and analysis and move tentatively into experimental designs, a number of other researchers and practitioners have questioned the appropriateness and relevance of such approaches to the field. (Mezirow, 1971; Apps, 1972; Knowles, 1972; Griffiths, 1979)

Much of this debate has centred around the appropriateness of qualitative versus quantitative approaches in the study of human behavior, a debate common to educational research generally. But adult educators in the field have added to that debate an additional dimension in posing the requirement that research should yield relevant results to the practitioner. A conference of leading adult educators organized by the Adult Education Association of the U.S.A. in 1978 to discuss emerging issues in the field identified, amongst other points, three key issues relating to research: (1) that a specialized knowledge base be developed which paid particular attention to adult development and learning; (2) that this knowledge base be better communicated to practitioners; and (3) that research and practice be better linked. (Adult Educ. Assn. of USA, 1979)

Their call for the development of a specialized knowledge base about the adult learner has been a recurring theme, articulated in 1961 as one major area of research which should be "original" to the field as distinct from the borrowing and adaptation of knowledge from other disciplines. (Long, 1980:19)

Mezirow (1971) was one of the first to address these issues of the development of a substantive body of knowledge which would link research and practice. He proposed the "grounded theory" approach developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as a methodology which could allow the development of a "research-based body of theory, indigenous to adult education and of practical utility to practitioners ..." (1971:135) Furthermore, he argued, the symbolic-interactionist epistemology which underlay this methodology provided a particularly appropriate rationale for the substantive focus of adult education - "the process of social interaction within the learning situation." (1971: 138)

Several years later Darkenwald further extended Mezirow's point:

> "Ultimately, the use of grounded theory in an applied field such as adult education is to improve professional practice through gaining a better understanding of it. It seems self-evident that little improvement can be expected without further systematic knowledge concerning what is actually going on in adult education programs. If the subject matter of the field is the process of adult education, then the actual behavior of students, teachers, and administrators and their interpretations of their experience are of central importance for developing theory and upgrading practice."
>
> (1980: 69)

The seventies, then, have seen two parallel developments in the evolution of adult education research: on the one hand, the use of increasingly sophisticated quantitative techniques and, on the other, the use of qualitative or field research methods. Both have their advocates but the latter category still represents a very small number of the total research studies reported in the journals or at research conferences. (Long, 1983) Nonetheless, such studies have re-focussed interest on the value of descriptive research about the adult learner and served to illustrate new ways of understanding the processes of adult education in a variety of situations.

Qualitative Research in Adult Education

Mezirow, Darkenwald and Knox (1975) were the first to use the grounded-theory approach in adult education research in a nation-wide, American study of adult basic education programs. Using the metaphor of gambling, their report describes the participants in such programs as "taking a last chance on education" and the pervasive effect of "the numbers game" - enrollment-based funding - on the attitudes and methods of the classroom teachers.

A similar, grounded-theory study of women's re-entry programs in community colleges conducted by Mezirow and Marsick (1978) described the process of "perspective transformation" as the "central process occurring in the personal development of women participating in college re-entry programs." (1978:7) In an *Adult Education* journal article on this research, Mezirow went on to suggest that the theoretical construct of perspective transformation derived from this

6

study has implications for adult educators' understanding of adult development and for the design and conduct of programs which hope to facilitate the adult developmental process. He recommends further such studies of adult education to understand the "perspective of students and program staff." (1978:108)

The grounded-theory approach used in these studies normally requires comparative analysis of a number of cases of the substantive area under study and at all times aims for explanation as well as description. (Darkenwald, 1980:68) This distinguishes such an approach from fieldwork which focuses on the detailed analysis of a single case and which may not have, as its objective, the casting of the data into theoretical propositions which have explanatory power. Darkenwald nonetheless suggests that single case studies may yield "valuable results" provided the research style "is characterized by flexibility, an emphasis on discovery, and an analytical stance toward data." (1980:69)

Two examples of such case study, field research which did not explicitly aim to generate grounded theory are doctoral dissertations by Bates (1979) and Taylor (1979). Both studies used the same intensive interview data to study the experience of adult learners in a learner-centred course at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. These studies were part of a larger initiative at this institution to address the process of adult learning through qualitative methods. (Griffiths, 1979:128)

Bates' study analyzes the learners' experience into descriptive themes and draws implications from this description for both learners and facilitators of such learner-centred programs. Taylor's study, however, went beyond description of common themes to generate a conceptual representation of the learning process from the learner's point of view, thus much more closely approximating Darkenwald's criterion of theory generation having explanatory power.

Despite these differences, however, both studies concur with Mezirow and Darkenwald in their call for adult educators to better attend to the adult learning process from the point of view of the learner and the power of qualitative approaches in such research.

The relevance of this study

It is suggested that this study is related to the types of qualitative research described above which have, as their focus, the adult learning experience. As a single case study, it does not attempt to generate grounded theory but, rather, describes adult participants' experience in a particular type of adult education program.

Its contribution is viewed as one of adding to the detailed documentation Darkenwald called for "of what is actually going on in adult education programs." (1980:69)

4. ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This chapter has provided the context of the study, describing its background and relationship to recent adult education research using qualitative research strategies. Chapter Two details the methodology: the techniques of data collection and analysis used in this field research. Chapter Three presents the background data to this case of participant experience; a description of the course history, the participants, and the setting. The participants' experience is the subject of Chapter Four, presented in a chronological, narrative form around major themes. Chapter Five summarizes the study and briefly discusses some of its implications for theory and practice in adult education.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

This chapter will present an outline of how the study was conducted. The definition of method, as used in this study, is that of Schatzman & Strauss:

> "Method is seen by the field researcher as emerging from operations - from strategic decisions, instrumental actions, and analytic processes - which go on throughout the entire research enterprise."
>
> (1973:7)

The key operations are reported in three sections, roughly following their chronological order: (1) getting organized and entering the field; (2) collecting and recording the data; and (3) analyzing the data.

Throughout this research I frequently found myself - in Darkenwald's words - "vexed" by the "lack of easily understood, codified rules for the collection and analysis of qualitative data." (1980:64) At virtually every point in the research process I was forced to make decisions and take actions on the basis of mixed advice and precedence in the qualitative research literature. In reporting the variety of operations employed in this study I will make reference to this literature. The intention here is to provide the reader with an understanding of the rationale for the particular decisions and operations in this study.

1. GETTING ORGANIZED AND ENTERING THE FIELD

Selecting the program

In Chapter I reference was made to the criteria used to select a situation-approach program as a site for this field research: (1) whether the nature of the program corresponded with the situation-approach previously defined; (2) whether I could comfortably participate in such a program; and (3) whether I could gain access to the situation with the clear understanding of my research intent.

The program which met these criteria - referred to in this study as "Transitions" - was one I knew had operated for some time and explicitly fit the situation-approach as defined by Lindeman. (1961:6). Since I planned to be a participant in the program as one of my research techniques, it was important to me that I have some experiential basis for my participation. Other possible situation - approach programs operating in the city, for example, those for people recently widowed or planning retirement, were thus excluded from my choice. "Transitions" focused on the situation of career change, one which was personally relevant to me at that time.

The criterion of being able to participate meaningfully in the program was related to my decision to select the "participant-as-observer" role for the field research. (Gold, 1969:35) My reasons for this role selection are discussed in more detail below.

Finally, the administrative sponsors of the program responded favourably to my research proposal, granting me permission to conduct the research, provided I could make further arrangements with the specific instructor and participants. The next sessions were due to start some six months later in the Fall term.

The program had two sections, specifically for women, each led by a different instructor and each slightly different in instructional approach. The first section was described in the program brochure as using "Transactional Analysis" as a principal instrument while the second suggested a more specific career focus using "philosophical and psychological models." The distinctions were not entirely clear from these descriptions while it was really the class process that I expected would be the more important distinction in selecting the section for my research.

I decided that the question of which of these sections might best provide me with an understanding of the participant experience could possibly be answered by interviewing those who had just completed the course that Spring. I also intended that this interviewing would provide me with some additional research experience in interviewing techniques.

The administrative sponsors of the program gave me access to the class lists of the two sections which had finished several weeks earlier.

Research Trials: Interviewing

Using the two class lists, I randomly selected three participants from each section and contacted them by telephone to request their permission to meet with them to discuss their experience in the Transitions program.

By chance, the three contacted in the first "Transactional Analysis" section had all remained in touch since the class ended and suggested that I meet with the three of them together in one of their homes. In the second, "career-oriented" section, one of those contacted was unable to meet with me but the other two each invited me to their homes to meet.

Three interviews were conducted: the first, a group interview with the three participants from the "Transitional Analysis" section, the second and third were individual interviews with two participants from the "career-oriented" section.

The participants were told of my interest in researching the experience of participants in a program like Transitions and asked to describe what the experience had been like for them. Specific questions were also asked about the approach taken by the instructor and the nature of the class activities. Each interview lasted approximately one and one-half hours and each was recorded on tape. Two of the interviews were later transcribed; the third could not be entirely transcribed because of problems with the quality of the recording.

Several key distinctions seemed to emerge from these interviews. The participants in the "Transactional Analysis" section described the class process as one emphasizing group interaction while the other seemed to have more of a lecture format. The participants from the "career-oriented" section referred to class notes as they described the activities while the other three reconstructed the process from memory and described it as more of an ongoing process in which they were still engaged.

Those in the "Transactional Analysis" section appeared to get to know each other better and, indeed, in the case of these three had maintained contact after the class ended. No such personal contact was reported by the other two where the interaction in the class was described as being principally with the instructor.

Based upon these interviews I decided that the interactive nature of the "Transactional Analysis" section might be more conducive to my research interest of getting to know the participants and understanding the course experience from their point of view. This section was to be offered by the same instructor in the coming Fall session.

Besides assisting me to choose the specific section I would use as my research site, the interviews also gave me a better understanding of how I would conduct interviews later in my research.

From them I decided to use an unstructured format wherever possible because this format yielded such rich data. These participants had been remarkably open and generous in discussing their experience and the unstructured format allowed them to express their viewpoints fully and uniquely. This I considered crucial to understanding their experience and I foresaw that my role as interviewer would be to at least initially allow the participants to lead the interview as much as possible, confining myself to questions of clarification.

The richness of their description seemed to require the use of a tape recorder to capture both the detail and the unique way they expressed their ideas. I doubted that I could adequately reconstruct this from written notes and I also found that note-taking was more obtrusive and distracting to both me and the interviewee. My experience with the use of the tape-recorder confirmed that this could be used successfully although the experience of having a faulty recording served to warn me of dangers of bad equipment. The time involved in transcribing these interviews was a consideration but I was determined that this was offset by the resulting quality and depth of the data I could obtain.

There was no reason to expect that these women would be typical of the participants in the Fall section but I was struck by their openness in discussing their experience and more confident in my ability as an interviewer to elicit their viewpoint.

Research Trials: Participant Observation

A few months prior to the interviews, while writing my research proposal, I undertook a small-scale participant-observation study in order to better familiarize myself with the research technique.

Using Spradley's Participant Observation (1980) as a guide, I conducted a short field study of a downtown bistro. Though limited to only five hours of observation, this experience gave me a much better understanding of the techniques of observation, recording, and analysis required in such field research.

I was particularly struck by the voluminous data one could collect through careful observation and the subsequent necessity of a careful recording system and of the practical difficulties of maintaining an explicit awareness of the events in the situation under study while simultaneously participating in and observing the scene.

This experience made me aware of and able to plan better for the record-keeping demands of my research and the tensions inherent in participant-observation as a data-collecting technique.

These two research trials - the "small-scale trial efforts" Darkenwald recommends (1980:65) - did help me to prepare myself for my research study. More importantly, they confirmed for me the power of such techniques for the kind of research question I was asking and the excitement and satisfaction of such field research.

Selecting the "participant-as-observer" role

Reference has already been made to the criteria for selection of the Transitions program that I be able to participate meaningfully in the situation under study and that my research intent be overtly understood by the other participants. This selection of the "participant-as-observer" role was based on pragmatic considerations regarding how I might best gain access to the information I needed and ethical considerations in doing field research.

Raymond Gold (1969) has elaborated earlier work done by Junker which defined a continuum of four theoretical roles for conducting field work ranging from the complete participant at one end to the complete observer at the other. In the complete participant role the observation or study purpose of the interaction is unknown to those observed while in the complete observer role there is no social interaction with those observed. Between these two extremes lie the participant-as-observer and the observer-as-participant, distinguished by the duration and formality of the social interaction. The participant-as-observer role allows for the development of relationships with informants over time through joint participation in the social situation under study.

The nature of my research question required that I select my field work role at the participant end of the continuum inasmuch as I would need to interact with the other participants to gain the information I needed. Observation alone would not sufficiently provide me with an understanding of the others' subjective experience. To gain access to the others and to develop the necessary rapport with them it seemed essential that I participate in the program sessions on an ongoing basis while to do so I personally felt that I would be more successful if the life situation the program was predicated upon had some personal reality to me. I simply doubted my ability to sustain the pretense that I was, for example, recently widowed.

The question of sustaining pretense in interaction in the field was the essential reason for rejecting the complete participant role where, by definition, my research intent or observation would be unknown by my informants. Not only did I not feel capable of such pretense; I felt strongly that ethical considerations prohibited it and in this respect followed the advice of such researchers as Spradley (1980) and McCall and Simmons (1969) in ensuring that informants were aware of the research objectives as they entered into interaction with the researcher.

The participant-as-observer role allowed me to ensure that my informants understood that our relationship was a field relationship where I sought information from them for an explicit purpose. Structuring that relationship, communicating my research purpose, and dealing with occasional conflict between my field work role and demands of self in that role are discussed at greater length in following sections.

Negotiating Access

In the Fall I enrolled as a student in the "Transactional Analysis" section of the Transitions program and met with the instructor to discuss my research objective. The day before the program was scheduled to begin I received a call from the course sponsors saying that the class would not run because of insufficient enrollment. I was struck by the irony that I had confidently selected this program because it had run so consistently in the past years, but fortunately the "career-oriented" section was scheduled to begin a week later in another location and the sponsors agreed to switch my registration to it.

I contacted the instructor of this section and asked to meet with him in advance of the first class to receive his permission to conduct my research. A personal meeting was held and we discussed my research objective and methodology at some length. "Stan" (the pseudonym used throughout for the instructor) attempted to persuade me that my study should be "tightened up", by entering with a "clearly defined problem" and "selected factors" as a basis for my observation. After a lengthy discussion about the premises and strategies of field research as contrasted with hypothesis-testing studies, he conceded that I might approach my research as I chose though he remained "skeptical" about my methods. Nonetheless, he agreed that I could enter the course in the dual role of participant-observer and that I would be free to inform the other participants about my research as and when I chose to do so.

The question of resolving an understanding of the research amongst those involved in the situation is dealt with at length in the field research literature. Schatzman and Strauss discuss the possible negotiations which the researcher might need to enter into in order to gain access to the situation and to address questions of primary interest. (1973:18-23) How the host "comprehends social research" is one potential barrier and subject for negotiation they cite.

But in contrast to some of the possible compromises some researchers might need to make in negotiating access, I was able to proceed as I had wished and, despite Stan's skepticism, he at no time intruded upon or attempted to impose his views upon my research while the program ran.

The permission of the program sponsor and instructor were important but it was the access to the other participants which was crucial. In this respect, my decision to enroll in the class as a student and to take on the participant-as-observer role effectively gave me the necessary entree to the other participants.

Unlike the study of community groups or organizations such as hospitals which are common locations of field research, my study was focused on an ad-hoc social situation. The individuals who participated in this setting were bound only by the time-limited and specific purpose of a program. I entered this ad-hoc situation in the same way and at the same time as the others and thus was not confronted with the problems of other field researchers who must establish their presence as a stranger in an already existing network of social relationships.

Negotiating access with the participants became a matter of establishing a relationship with them in which they would be willing to describe to me the class experience from their point of view.

2. COLLECTING AND RECORDING THE DATA

Techniques for Recording

My previous small-scale, trial efforts at observation and interviewing impressed upon me the necessity for a system to record the voluminous data collected in field research. Practical suggestions for such systems were provided by Spradley (1980) and Schatzman and Strauss (1973).

Essentially, the need was for a system to record data gained through observations and interviews in the field which would have sufficient detail to recreate the scene, and to organize this data in such a way that I could retrieve relevant data as analysis proceeded. A secondary but still important need was a means to chronicle the research itself, providing a record of the operational decisions made and the commentary and analysis I formulated over time.

The system I selected was based on Spradley's recommendation for different sets of field notes: (1) condensed notes taken during or immediately after observation sessions or interviews, (2) expanded notes describing observation sessions in detail and typed verbatim transcripts of interviews, and (3) a journal which provided a chronicle of the research and a vehicle for theoretical and methodological notes.

Spradley recommends a fourth set of notes for analysis and interpretation which I did not follow exactly as he suggested, since I incorporated analysis into my journal.

The condensed notes were recorded in a small notebook and consisted of key words, the purpose of which was to trigger my memory of events when I elaborated my notes later. These entries were dated. The majority of such notes were taken in the class sessions or where note-taking could be done unobtrusively or immediately after the session. Because the instructor lectured or gave notes and assignments throughout the sessions this notebook also served for my "student" notes as well as my research notes.

The next day the condensed notes were expanded into detailed accounts of the sessions, largely using a narrative form to describe the class events. These were hand-written on numbered and dated pages with the lines numbered as well to later facilitate data retrieval.

Interviews were all tape-recorded. Condensed notes were sometimes written after the interview, if required, to record discussion not on tape or observations made during the interview session. All interviews were transcribed by myself as soon as possible after the interview, normally within a week's time at most. All interview transcriptions were typed on numbered and dated pages with the lines numbered. Condensed notes about the interviews were elaborated and added to the interview transcription but labelled differently to distinguish them as "observational."

On three occasions problems with the tape recording made verbatim transcripts impossible. In these cases much of the conversation had to be reconstructed. When this happened notations were added to the transcripts to distinguish actual transcription from reconstruction.

The expanded observation notes and interview transcriptions were kept in a binder, ordered chronologically, and colour-tabbed to distinguish class session notes from participant interviews and interview rounds. In total there were seven hundred pages of expanded notes when the data collection was completed. This set of notes was maintained intact with copies being used for data analysis.

The journal was used as a chronological record of the study, a vehicle for my own reflections and decisions about the research and a place to generate tentative analysis. This use of the journal to analyze events, note patterns, and form interpretive categories increased the longer I was in the field and became a means to reflect on the data analysis phase.

These three sets of notes clearly overlapped with their chronological order allowing me to access the related information. In Appendix A this overlap is illustrated by providing a sample of condensed notes made during an observation session; the expanded notes based on these, recounting the particular encounter in more detail; and finally, the journal entry about the related methodological question this encounter raised.

Participant-Observation

The Transitions program consisted of ten, three-hour sessions held weekly in the evenings. For the last two sessions the participants were divided into two groups with each group attending only one of the sessions. In total, then, I participated in and observed twenty-seven hours of class time. This along with approximately forty hours of interviews held outside of class time, were my means of collecting data about the participant experience.

My selection of the participant-as-observer role demanded that I balance the dual focus of participation and observation throughout the class sessions. The advantages of the full participant role were to establish a relationship with the other participants by which I could better understand their viewpoint and to use my own subjective experience of the program as an ongoing check to the feelings and thoughts of the other participants. (McCall & Simmons, 1969:4) The disadvantage, however, was that participation would sometimes become so intensely engaging that observation of the others' and the situation as a whole would be threatened by its demands. (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973:61) Over the weeks of field study I experienced both the advantages and disadvantages of these dual roles.

Some of the basic strategies used in data collection in the class sessions were, essentially, strategies for watching, listening, and interacting and all of them were influenced by the format of class activities as determined by the instructor.

Schatzman and Strauss describe three forms of listening:

eavesdropping, situational conversation, and interviewing; and three corresponding forms of watching: passive presence, limited interaction, and active control of which the formal interview is the archetype. (1973:59-60,70-71) All of these strategies were used with the trend over time toward much more active control of interaction in the formal interview outside the class sessions. In fact, interviews became necessary earlier than I had anticipated because the class format restricted in-class interaction of the type I needed to better understand the participants' thoughts and feelings about the course.

The first two sessions were almost exclusively taken up with instructor lectures which essentially dictated a much more passive form of both watching and listening inasmuch as I wished to be a full participant and the appropriate behavior for participation was passive. In these sessions the demands of participation meant my opportunity for observation was relatively unimpeded. However, what I could observe was necessarily limited, too.

The physical arrangement of the room with all of us in rows facing the instructor restricted my ability to actually even see all of the others, while the passive nature of the lecture meant that I could, at best, observe only external indicators of the participants' thoughts and feelings such as facial expression or body language. I was confined to eavesdropping on discussion immediately after the class ended in order to gain some understanding of how they might be interpreting the activities. It was after the first session that I concluded that I would have to quickly approach the participants about interviewing them although I had originally planned to wait for several weeks before doing this to first allow the better development of a relationship with them.

Wishing to overcome the passivity of the first session, in the second session I began to make more use of situational conversation immediately before and after the class, posing simple but direct questions to several of the participants and at the same time explaining my interest in better understanding their experience.

Situational conversation and eavesdropping both before and after the class and later in the coffee-break when it was introduced in the third session continued to be my major strategies for focused interaction in the class sessions.

For the third, fourth and fifth sessions, the instructor incorporated more active participant involvement in discussion and simulation games which consequently allowed me to better understand their viewpoints as they articulated them in that setting. At the same time, the more active role demanded by my own participation also competed with my opportunity to observe. During these sessions it was inappropriate for me to take notes all of the time and I was forced to reconstruct dialogues and events after the fact. Nonetheless, I found that I was able to remember a great deal of what went on in such activities and to reconstruct even lengthy exchanges on the basis of a few condensed notes.

In these sessions where group activities dominated, I did experience the problem of maintaining the observer stance in the midst of the demands of full participation. Fortunately, during this time I was interviewing the participants outside of class and was able then to elicit their viewpoint on these sessions. This both compensated for what I could not observe and balanced my own subjective experience as participant.

The combination of subjective experience as a participant, the observation of the other participants in the sessions, and in interviews the reconstruction and elaboration of events from this perspective, formed the means to continually monitor the validity of the observations and inferences made.

From the sixth session on, the classes were taken up with the administration of a battery of tests which once again restored the participant-observer roles to a more manageable balance. At the same time, my relationship with the others had been established well enough through the sessions and out-of-class interviews that situational conversation in the kind of limited interaction afforded by the class became both more frequent and more fruitful. My research role was better understood by the others and, at the same time, I was better accepted as a fellow participant.

To conclude, the strategies for participant-observation in the class sessions were partially dictated by the class format, the relationship developed with the participants, and the demands of maintaining a full participant-as-observer role. As the field work proceeded I was able to increasingly structure opportunities for interaction but it was the interviews outside the class which gave me the best understanding of how the participants themselves viewed the class experience.

Interviews

Although the class format in the first sessions, in particular, prompted me to more quickly arrange for interviews outside of the class with the participants, it had always been my intention to conduct such interviews as an important part of the data collection. I wished to understand how the participants experienced the class from their own viewpoints. Observation in the class - even with the increasing opportunities there for interaction - was simply insufficient for this purpose.

Figure 1 shows the schedule of observation periods and interviews over the weeks of field research. (All names are pseudonyms.) All nine participants and the instructor were interviewed at least once. Only one participant, Janet, was unavailable for an interview while the class was actually meeting. Barbara could only be interviewed by telephone in the last round of interviews after the class ended. All the participants were interviewed in their own homes while the instructor was interviewed in his office.

Essentially there were two rounds of interviews. The first was held while the class was still meeting and the second after the

WEEKS OF FIELD RESEARCH	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
OBSERVATION CLASS SESSIONS		X	X	X	class cancel	X	X	X	X	X		X[1]												
INTERVIEWS																								
STAN	X																		X					
ELLEN					X												X							
BARBARA					X																		X[2]	
MARIE					X												X	X[2]						
RUTH				X													X							
SANDRA						X		X									X							
ANNE								X									X							
CAROL						X											X							
JANET																		X						
JENNY				X				X	X			X							X					X[2]

[1] Half of the participants met in Week II, not observed

[2] Telephone interviews

Figure 1
Schedule of Observation and Interviews

class ended. But one participant, Jenny, was interviewed more frequently in an effort to capture the class experience in more detail from at least one point of view.

This decision to highlight one participant's experience was based on the practical consideration of the amount of time required to interview each of the nine participants more than twice. I was subject to their availability and scheduling even two interviews with all of them was a problem. Selecting one participant for more in-depth interviewing seemed to provide me with a reasonable compromise by which I could understand the class experience in more detail for one participant yet counterpoint that specific experience with the others'. Clearly no one participant was representative of them all so the selection of Jenny was based on her availability and willingness to meet with me more frequently and, most importantly, her candour and ease in the interviews - something established in the first round of interviews.

My objectives in the first round of interviewing were threefold: (1) to more fully describe my research intention; (2) to understand their definition of their situation as they entered the program and how they understood the program in relation to this situation; and (3) to understand the thoughts and feelings they had about the class sessions to date - how they were interpreting what occurred in the sessions.

These objectives, however, were not viewed as a specific and ordered set of questions by which the interview was to be structured.

Instead, in this first round, the interview style was really more of an extended conversation in which I wished to exercise only moderate control. The interviewing tactics used were confined to posing general questions, prompting, clarifying and summarizing. (Schatzman and Strauss, 1969:71-74)

An important task in this first set of interviews was to convey to the participants that I respected whatever their expressed views were and their right to choose to what degree they wished to disclose information to me. One important element of conveying this respect was to refrain from judgment about what they were saying but, instead, to focus on understanding better what they were saying.

In this first round it was also necessary for me to establish a rapport with them which would allow them to trust me. One method of doing this was to disclose some information about myself as a fellow participant. In so doing, I was conscious of not wishing to influence their views of the class experience itself and thus tried to limit self-disclosure to information about my personal situation rather than my viewpoint about the actual class sessions. Nonetheless, the tension of roles between fellow-participant and interviewer did sometimes create unease for me.

What follows are edited excerpts of the transcribed interview with Barbara, held in the fifth week, to illustrate the types of questions asked in these first interviews and to give some notion of their conversational nature: (I indicates interviewer.)

Explaining the research purpose

[As the tape begins, B has asked me what it is that I am doing the research for.]

I This will be, I hope, my Master's Thesis. My topic is essentially to try to describe, from the point of view of the people who take (the course) what it's like ... That is, what kinds of thoughts and feelings do people have as they go through this process. Which is, again, why I want people's thoughts and feelings in their own words because I'm trying to give it from the point of view of the people who are ...

B Who are experiencing it.

I are experiencing it, right.

Posing general questions, prompting

B ... So for some girls who are single parents they have to look at their careers a little more practically than I do. And maybe that helps, too, because I think that one of the biggest difficulties is there are just too many choices. That I have found, too, even for myself. Too many choices, it's confusing.

I Well it's certainly changed. When I was going to school you were either a nurse or a teacher.

B True.

I I am glad there are more choices these days.

B Absolutely. But don't you feel when you even look at the adult education program, you look at this and say, in a lifetime I couldn't take all of these ....

I How did you choose Transitions, then, if you were having so much trouble making choices? (laughs) Did you stick a pin in the paper?

B (laughing) No, I had heard of the Transitions program. And, you know, what do I hope to get from it? If I get nothing more than the exercises that we've been having every week and then following them through daily - because

I think about some of the things we've talked about everyday - I would feel that that would be great.

I What triggers you to think of the exercises?

Questions of clarification, checking meaning

I You used the word earlier, I think you said, Transitions focused things you had already thought about.

B Oh yes, absolutely ... When you go through the exercises you just think well, my god, look at that. If that isn't exactly what happened and I knew it was, I just couldn't necessarily verbalize it, or put a name to it, or explain it, or accept it, and now all these things seem to be a bit easier....

I So you haven't found out anything that was totally surprising but you kind of brought it to the surface? Would that be an accurate ...

B Oh, I would say that it would definitely be an accurate way of describing it. It's been brought to the fore ...

Although the content of each interview certainly differed, their conversational form was quite standard with the major distinction being the degree to which it was necessary to prompt or probe in order to clarify meaning.

This conversational, unstructured interview form was also used in the four interviews held with Jenny prior to the program ending. Because we met more frequently, these conversations were more wide-ranging with one of the interviews almost exclusively focused on her description of her personal history and her situation as she defined it at that time. She also described in much more detail her interpretation of the class sessions, the thoughts and feelings she had about the class.

The second round of interviews was much more structured with a set of questions asked of all participants. This set of questions was developed to test out tentative propositions generated through data analysis to that point, to verify the accuracy of my understanding of what they had told me in the first interview and their actions in the class sessions, and to ensure that I had a clear understanding of how they viewed the course experience while in class and some weeks later.

For each interview I prepared a detailed summary of what they had told me about how they defined their situation, making note of questions I wished to further pursue to clarify this definition of situation. I also reviewed the observation notes of the class sessions and made note of any of their actions in the class which I wished to better understand.

Although there was some slight variation in the order and specific wording of the questions, the second interviews followed the basic outline in Appendix B.

At the conclusion of these interviews a note of thanks was sent to all the participants.

The interview with the instructor was of a similar, structured nature with the focus of this interview being to elicit his viewpoint on the course, his intentions in selecting specific activities and structuring the class sessions as he had. As with the questions asked of the participants, this specific set of questions was developed to test out several tentative propositions, to fill in missing information about the history of the course, and to verify my understanding of the instructor's viewpoint on the course as he had initially described it in our first interview and demonstrated it through his actions in the class sessions.

The fact that the data collection being carried out in the second interview round was partially formulated by the data analysis,illustrated the inevitable overlap and interaction between data collection and data analysis in field research. This process of analysis, which began before data collection was complete, is described in the next section.

3. ANALYZING THE DATA

The literature of qualitative research provides a myriad of views about the correct operations to be employed in analysis, views which reflect the exceedingly wide range of disciplines, traditions, methods, and purposes which are encompassed within the term qualitative research. As Schatzman and Strauss describe it, analytic styles presented in the literature may cover the spectrum from those researchers who "are satisfied to deal with uncodified, anecdotal data and depend almost entirely upon the fortuitous development of insight;" to those who "laboriously codify their data and apply more systematic analytic techniques...to arrive at social theory." (1973:109)

For the novice researcher this spectrum of possibilities, the lack of consensus, the absence of codified rules of procedure, can be unnerving when confronted with a mass of data which must, somehow, be distilled and organized.

The concept of analysis which became, finally, most useful to me was one described by Schatzman and Strauss as "thinking that is self-conscious, systematic, organized and instrumental...an interactive process between the researcher and his experience or data ..." (1973:109) Such a concept allowed me to think about the way in which I tried to make sense of my data, to render it into some meaningful account which could be conveyed to others.

It was a process which, while systematic in some respects, in others depended on intuition and insight. Most of all, it was a process of elimination, of stripping the story to its essential theme. In so doing, other themes, other stories were lost. As Bogdan and Biklin point out, "analysis is a process of data reduction," (1982 :166) but this does not well describe what is essentially a process of distancing one's self from the people one has come close to while in the field.

The purpose of this section is to recount, as much as possible, the interactive process I went through in distilling some seven hundred pages of raw data into what will be presented in the succeeding chapters. It must be made clear that this is a reconstruction of the process and the account may appear to be more linear and logical than it truly was. Samples of the analysis are included in Appendix C but these are meant only to represent some of the discrete elements which were combined to create the whole picture I eventually chose to present.

The first phase of analysis

The previous description of data collection indicated that the analysis phase overlapped with it. Indeed, almost from the first day of research, the observation notes and interview transcripts were searched for patterns and meaning. But the majority of my time and effort were focused on questions of tactics in the field. Establishing rapport, techniques of interviewing and observation preoccupied me. These methodological notes formed the bulk of my journal entries through the first weeks of research.

It was only after the class sessions ended and I prepared for the second round of interviews with the participants that I began a more systematic process of coding the data.

The analysis was focused on the interview data only and consisted of systematically searching the transcripts for two broad categories of information: anything said by the participants about their situation as they entered the course and anything they expressed about the class events. These two categories corresponded to my initial, exploratory questions: how did the participants define their situation when entering the class and how did they interpret events or activities in the class.

Data related to each of these categories were transcribed onto file cards, cross-indexed by interview and page number to the original transcripts.

My initial purpose for this coding was to identify any gaps in the data which could be attended to in the next interviews. But in reading over the data in the "interpretation of events" category, I was struck by the wide variety it encompassed. One participant would focus on a particular idea or activity, others would make no mention of it. One would describe an activity as "helpful" while another would describe the same event as "useless." What was even more interesting, however, was the very use of these judgmental descriptors. The participants appeared to order and judge classroom events largely on the basis of whether they understood them to be related to one's self.

Furthermore, when each participant's ordering and judgment was compared to her definition of situation, there appeared to be a linkage between them. From this linkage I developed a first tentative proposition: that their entering definition of situation - which included an expectation of how the course fit within it - acted to selectively direct their attention and their judgments. I called this the "spotlight" phenomenon.

To this point, the concept of definition of situation had been, at best, an "orienting concept," general in nature and serving to loosely structure data collection. (McCall & Simmons, 1969:232) But this proposition suggested that it might be a useful analytic construct as well and in the next interview I tried to ensure that I had sufficient additional data to complete the category for all participants.

Similarly, the category of interpretation of events was added to and the distinctions they drew between events were probed. For example, one participant in the first interview had used the term "speak to me" to distinguish between ideas and activities in the class. In the second interview I probed for the meaning of this term: what is the difference between something that speaks to you and something that doesn't.

The second phase of analysis

When the final round of interviews was completed and the tapes transcribed, a similar process was used of transcribing data onto file cards for each of the two major categories.

With the addition of this data both initial categories were large and needed a finer analysis. Reasoning that how the participants categorized the events might reveal something about their way of thinking and feeling about the class, I used an analytic technique described by Spradley (1980), as "taxonomic analysis." This allowed me to subject all of the items in the category to an analysis of dimensions of contrast. This was done for each participant and then the common dimensions categorized together.

This analysis yielded a number of new categories, each corresponding to the way in which events were categorized by the participants: for example: by format, by content, by results. What became clear out of this analysis was that the participants used a set of cues to define and label the events in the class of which the format (whether the instructor "lectured" or not) and the content (whether the ideas and information were perceived as "academic" or not) were the most commonly used cues.

These, in turn, were subjected to further analysis to identify attributes of such labels as "academic," "personal," and "helpful."

At the same time, the study of the definitions of situation category revealed dimensions of contrast in terms of the specificity and urgency of the participants' expectations and goals. But their commonality was more striking that these differences. In volunteered statements, the majority of them described themselves as "seeking direction."

This process of categorization and study of each category gave me a deeper understanding of my data. As I analyzed the interview transcripts in such detail, I was also reading and re-reading the observation notes of the class session and roughly coding the interview transcript with the instructor, attempting to summarize and describe his viewpoint about the course.

It was this immersion in the data - a term I had read about but previously never understood as a real activity - which moved my analysis beyond the consideration of discrete categories to a larger pattern or motif which provided a way to link the categories. Consciously trying to situate myself in the minds of the participants, then of the instructor, I wrote a series of theoretical memos in my journal which attempted to recreate the classroom experience from these viewpoints.

The incidents in the classroom, particularly where there were at least latent conflicts with the instructor (expressions of exasperation, questioning the "point" of the activity), focused my attention on differences in the viewpoints.

It was at this point that the earlier proposition of linkage between definition of situation and selective attention began to be elaborated, partly as a result of the search for a way to describe what was happening, partly as a result of an intuition about the overall motif.

The concept of perspective provided me with the tool I needed for this. It was a term I had used amost interchangeably with the term definition of situation but was not well defined in my own mind. Returning to some of the literature I had read earlier, I found that the concept had been defined and used by Becker et al in two studies (1961, 1968) as a central concept to provide an analytic framework for the treatment of their data.

Encompassing the earlier category of definition of situation, the concept of perspective extended the explanatory power of the earlier proposition by allowing new categories by which to organize the data: goals, actions, and criteria of judgment. For the first time I had a way to compare the viewpoints of participants and instructor and to encompass not only their thoughts as described in the interviews but their actions in the classroom.

The adoption of this concept is similar to what Schatzman & Strauss refer to ~~as~~ using "substantive levers." (1973:120) They caution the researcher to confine these levers to preliminary analysis inasmuch as such "received classificatory schemes" may prevent progress from "straight description" to "analytic description." The latter is distinguised by the development of an organizational scheme which "is developed from discovered classes and linkages suggested or mandated by the data." (1973:110)

While I accept their distinction and the caution that derived concepts may tend to distort the data, I contend that, in this study, the borrowing of this concept has not distorted the data. Having fully grounded the earlier categories in the experience of the participants, the concept of perspective usefully provided a framework by which these categories could be linked and a description ordered. The utility of the concept was of primary concern to me and in this respect I found it a powerful heuristic device. In so using it, I accept that I may not have attained the level they define as "analytic description."

The final step of analysis consisted of testing the value of the framework against the evidence of the data. The additional analytic components of goals, actions, and criteria of judgment provided new coding categories by which both observation and interview data could be analyzed. In using these the contrast between the perspective of the participants and the instructor began to be clarified and to lead to a fuller understanding of the differences in their intentions and actions in the classroom. The major theme, an encounter of perspectives, arose directly from this comparative analysis. Earlier categories where I had substantial data (such as ways of categorizing classroom events) and specific events in the classroom could now be profitably used as illustrations of this major theme and its sub-themes.

Strictly speaking, the last steps of analysis or data reduction came in the writing stage when final decisions were made about what could be included in the final presentation of data. My guidelines here were twofold: to present sufficient data that the concepts and themes would be well illustrated and to provide the reader with a sense of the narrative flow of the experience.

My original research purpose was to describe, from the participants' point of view, the experience of adult learners in an educational program designed specifically to address decision-making in a life situation. The reader must now assess whether this is done in a coherent and credible manner.

CHAPTER THREE

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA: BACKGROUND

The presentation of the data has been divided into two chapters primarily for the convenience of the reader. This Chapter provides background information about the Transitions course, the program selected as a vehicle for this study of adult participants' experiences in a continuing education program. The Chapter is divided into four sections.

The first section introduces the instructor and outlines his development of the course into its present form, describing the way in which he conceptualizes the course and the manner in which he has organized it. This description is drawn from the two interviews held with the instructor prior to and after the course.

The second section describes how the specific "Garden City" section of the course was organized.

The third section briefly profiles each of the nine participants who registered in the course, describing their reasons for enrolling and their expectations of it. These profiles are based on interviews held with each of the participants.

The fourth section describes the setting for the course.

All names of people and places, including the course title, have been changed.

1. THE HISTORY OF THE COURSE

Transitions is a non-credit program for women offered for approximately ten years in Capital City. Over that period the course instructors have changed and, with that change, the particular emphasis of the course has also varied. However, in the last few years, two different sections have been offered, each with a slightly different emphasis. One offers a more general orientation to self-awareness through the use of tools such as Transactional Analysis. The other offers a more specific focus on education and career decision making, principally through the use of a battery of vocational aptitude and interest tests. It is the latter section of the course which was ultimately selected for this research.

The Course Instructor

Stan, the course instructor, is in his mid-forties, married with a family, and employed full-time as a High School Work Experience Coordinator in the nearby centre of Garden City. During his career in education he has taught or worked as a Counsellor at all levels of the public school system as well as at the post-secondary level. He holds degrees in both the Social Sciences and Education; his primary interest being in Psychology.

Stan began teaching the Transitions course about five years ago while enrolled in graduate courses in Educational Psychology at the University in Capital City. There he had heard that the course sponsors were looking for instructors with a background in educational testing. He had applied, been offered the job, and has continued to teach the course in both the Fall and Winter terms each year.

He has enjoyed teaching the course both because of "the flexibility" he feels he is allowed by the course sponsors in determining how to approach the course content and because he likes working with adults:

> "The group that I personally enjoy working with are adults. As a teacher you have to create an atmosphere in the classroom. If you have a lot of it coming (from the class members), boy, you've got a lot to work with. (Adults bring) their experiences, their maturity, and they're being serious, earnest about what they're trying to do. They put everything into it. You can actually then *teach*; you're not disciplining."

Developing the Course

When Stan was first hired he asked for some background to the course and was given "a general outline" and some "sheets of commentary from people who had taken the course in the past." He formed the impression that the instructors before him had "been sort of doing their own thing; it depended where your emphasis was and what you thought was important."

His own conception of the course was that it could really only offer "a first step," an "orientation" for the women as they began to make decisions about life changes:

> "To me it was more of an orientation ... more confidence building, awareness of self, meeting other people in the same situation as oneself and finding out from them, gaining a little more confidence in oneself and being prepared to make that move."

Once he began teaching the course an initial difficulty in planning his approach was the diversity of interests presented by the women. He found that they fell into two categories: "the people who really wanted to get an orientation to self and those that are interested in careers only." Since he felt that the course "really wasn't meant to be everything and all things to all people," he decided to take what he calls a very "generalistic" approach. Requests for specific career information could be addressed on an individual basis he decided, while class activities would be reserved to emphasize what was generally applicable to both groups. Deciding what was generally applicable content evolved out of his understanding of what the women were asking for as well as his own assumptions about common motivations and needs.

One of the major presuppositions he brought to the course was rooted in his own background in Psychology, particularly the literature of existential psychology. From this background he had developed a conception of cyclical changes in identity over the life-span. According to this conception most people, at intervals in life, would go through an "uprooting" of identity leading to "anomie" and "alienation." The task for each person was to use the impetus provided by that uprooting to "authentically confront our existential relationship with the world."

In accordance with this conception, he assumed that most people were motivated to come to the course by some "disturbance" or "dissatisfaction" in their present life:

> "If they were quite happy and on some route in life then I think they would be off taking some other kinds of courses. I think anyone who takes a course in confidence-building or assertiveness or some kind of (course like this), I would say there is some dissatisfaction."

He felt that it was imperative for all of the women to understand the basis for the "dissatisfaction" they were feeling. This examination would be helpful both to those who wanted a general orientation to self and to those who were interested in careers because, he believed, "you really can't go by way of career decision-making without knowing yourself."

> "So, I'm saying that people really have to look at where they are and why they're doing what they're doing ... I'm saying be aware of what you have based your decisions on. Why am I changing? What do I want to change? Then change becomes meaningful."

The exact definition of the course content and activities did not gel until he had taught several sections of the course:

> "I began basically with something not quite structured. We got into such things as resume writing and all kinds of things - a variety of things I was trying out. After about the second year I saw the trend was basically one of people wanting some further knowledge about themselves. This was certainly tied into the kinds of relationships they were developing or not developing. And then themselves as workers. And at the point I said well, maybe we should sort of divide the program in that way. What would be the proper, sequential order of things? So that package came to be."

The "package" he developed divides the course into three parts. The first focuses on the "self as individual" and is intended to stimulate awareness of one's self and the process of personal change. The second examines "the self in relationships," particularly one's patterns of interaction in simulated work groups. The third is "the self as worker" and consists of a battery of tests measuring aptitudes, vocational interests, and individual temperament which may influence career choices. One session at the end is set aside to discuss the test results and look at career or educational resource material.

Although Stan likes to "experiment" with variations in some of the content he presents, this three-part outline has remained mostly intact since then. He feels that this package provides a logical sequence in regard to the steps one should go through when making decisions about changes in life or career patterns and is sufficiently general to address most of the concerns people in a class have. He considers himself "a pragmatist" - he "uses what works" - and makes that judgment on the basis of what he observes in the class, what class members tell him directly, and through course evaluations completed at the end of the course:

> " I want to know what is successful; let's do things that are successful - my pragmatic side coming out. As I say, this stuff works ... I am getting a high percentage of success from this thing. I'm realistic as well. I know that I can't satisfy everybody and everybody has their own kind of orientation. But, at the same time, I know by my feedback that I'm satisfying the needs of these people. And I'm saying what am I here for? That's what I'm here for. And that's why I carry on.

2. ORGANIZING THE GARDEN CITY SECTION

In the Fall of 1980, at the time of this study, the Transitions course was being offered for the first time in Garden City. This decision had been made largely at the suggestion of Stan, who was familiar with the community and was of the opinion that there was a need for such a course there.

Garden City's boundaries adjoin those of Capital City. A suburban community, it has grown in the last decade to a population of 30,000. Its new residential areas, largely middle class, have grown as the result of a demand for housing unavailable in Capital City and many of its residents commute to work there. However, it also attracts those who perceive it to offer a quieter, small-town atmosphere. Many such residents prefer to use the local shopping, leisure, and recreational services which are considered more convenient.

Stan was actively involved in arranging for the course to be offered in Garden City. At the same time, he took the opportunity to experiment with a new course format which would use cable television to present some of the course subject matter. He felt this would allow them to reach a wider student group. The TV presentations were to be complemented with group sessions. Arrangements were made with the local cable television company for this.

The course was advertised locally in the Fall, 1980 Further Education Program brochure prepared by the Garden City Further

Education Council and delivered free to homes in the city. The Transitions course was described in substantially the same way as it had been in advertisements in Capital City but with the additional information about the use of cable television:

> "A program for women who are contemplating furthering their education and/or changing their role through embarking on or resuming a career. It will also be of interest to those whose family needs have changed or who are contemplating a change. The emphasis will be on the total person within the context of a "second look" at the self-as-individual, self-in-relationships and self-as-worker.
>
> The self-as-individual is explored through philosophical and psychological models with aptitudes, interests and personality preferences examined through testing. Interpretation of this information is achieved through individual counselling sessions in the latter two classes. Self-in-relationships is reviewed through group activities and discussions. Self-as-worker is discussed in terms of investigating possible goals as well as possibilities of enhancing, advancing and securing present goals.
>
> Arrangements have been made to present the subject matter portion of the course via Cable with classroom sessions conducted at the High School for group activities and testing.
>
> The intent of such a course is to facilitate/assist the individual to initiate planning for desired change and to understand the process of change.

Elsewhere in the brochure the starting date (Monday, September 29), the duration (10 weeks), and the fee ($60.00) was given. The instructor's name was also provided.

There was initially some difficulty getting enough registrations. The course sponsors had a policy of requiring a minimum of twelve registrations before proceeding with the course. The starting date was set back while Stan attempted to find a new day and time more suitable to most and to allow more time for registration.

In addition, there were some difficulties with the idea of using cable television. Some of the women who were interested in the course did not have cable reception or found the suggested broadcast times inconvenient or impossible to work into their schedules. Furthermore, most expressed a preference for group sessions only. The idea of using TV was thus dropped and the usual course format of ten, weekly, two and one-half hour sessions reintroduced.

By the second week of October the minimum registration of twelve had still not been reached but the decision was made to go ahead with the course anyway. Nine women (excluding the researcher) turned up for the first session held Thursday night, October 9. All stayed in the course until it was completed; the last session being held on December 18.

3. THE PARTICIPANTS

All nine of the participants lived in Garden City. As a group they varied in age from early thirties to late forties and had formal education ranging from incomplete high school to five years of professional university training. One was divorced and raising a family on her own; the others were all married. Two had no children. At the time the course began, three held full-time jobs outside the home, one had just resigned from a part-time nursing job, one was enrolled full-time in a a secretarial course, and the other four were raising families at home.

The diversity of age, education and employment status is a common feature of the groups who have enrolled in the Transitions course over the years it has been offered. Based on his prior experience with some ten groups he has taught, Stan assessed this group as "representative" of all that he had taught. It differed only in that it was the smallest group he had ever had; most classes in Capital City had closer to twenty enrolled.

What follows is a brief description of each of the nine women, giving her reasons for enrolling in the course.

Ellen is in her mid-thirties with three children, ages ten to sixteen. Prior to her marriage she worked as a book-keeper but has remained at home to raise her family since then. She is actively involved in a youth-group as a volunteer, serving on several zone and provincial committees. She describes this as "almost a full-time job." She intends to look for paid employment when her children are older but foresees this as being "at least five years away."

Each year she likes to enroll in a continuing education course to "try something new." This Fall it was the Transitions Course which "caught her eye." From the description she thought that it would be suitable for her even if she wasn't planning to work right away. She saw it as "a self-improvement kind of thing," an opportunity to "expand her outlook" and she decided to enroll and "see what I get out of this."

Barbara is in her early forties, married, with three children, the oldest of whom has graduated from high school and left home. She first re-entered the labour-force on a part-time basis six years ago but is now employed full-time as an office supervisor.

She had always thought that when her children got older she would probably return for further education and select a "second career." But she is also preoccupied with questions about "choices and life-goals" and she felt that she needed "some set time to reassess my life goals." The Transitions course could provide that opportunity, she felt. She wanted to examine the question, "can I do all the things I wanted to do all along and are they as important as ever?"

Marie is in her late forties, married, with two grown sons from a former marriage, and one eight-year old daughter. She raised her two sons on her own, working at a variety of office and sales jobs. When she remarried and had her daughter she stayed home to be with her. She now notices her daughter becoming increasingly independent and finds herself "thinking about the future." Her husband has recently started his own company and travels a great deal and "works constantly."

She describes herself as "restless and dissatisfied, feeling I've got things left to do that I haven't tried but I don't know what they are." She had heard of the course before and was "curious" about it. She decided to enroll because she thought "maybe somebody who was trained in that field could maybe steer you or give you hints to know which direction to take."

Ruth is in her late forties, married, with four children. She is a Registered Nurse; for the past sixteen years working part-time in the field of Geriatrics, primarily in extended care facilities.

She describes her choice of nursing as a case of "limited options" when she was young. She finds nursing a "stressful" occupation and this anxiety has been compounded in the last few years by having to also assume the responsibilities of a team leader. She was not comfortable with this "leadership role," preferring to "be a follower and just be responsible for my own work-load."

This past summer she made the decision to quit nursing at least for a while. Having worked outside the home for so many years, however, she wasn't sure she would be happy staying at home. She wondered whether there was some other kind of work she could do which would be "less demanding" but was unsure of her abilities and afraid to apply for something totally different. At the suggestion of a colleague, she enrolled in the Transitions course. She described herself as "looking for some direction in making a change or direction as to whether a change would, in fact, be beneficial or possible for me as an individual."

Sandra is in her early thirties, married, with two children in elementary school. She has found the role of housewife and mother very demanding and had begun to feel that she, as an individual, was being neglected. "For the last couple of years I've been thinking of branching out. My last kid has started Grade One now so I thought if I started doing something now, preparing myself, then once they're more on their own, I can be me."

She has university training in Physical Education and has worked as a medical secretary. However, neither of those appealed to her as possible career options now. She enrolled in the course because she wanted to "take a look" at what she might do in the future. "Mainly I just want to know that I'm going in the right direction."

Anne is in her late forties with four sons, ages ten to nineteen. Before she was married she worked in an office but, while raising her family, she did not work outside the home. She was divorced two years ago and has spent those two years "overcoming the emotional trauma" of the marriage breakdown and regaining her self-confidence.

This past summer she had reached a level of confidence where she felt "there was just no reason why you couldn't do anything" and began to examine possibilities for further education and a career. She eventually decided to enroll in a Secretarial course because she had done that kind of work before and because it would give her "a marketable skill" in a relatively short time. But she saw this as "a first step" and wanted to continue to explore other options for herself.

The Transitions course, she felt, would provide an opportunity to determine what her "potential" was. "I want to know if I could be in a really different type of field and be good at it."

Carol is in her mid-thirties, married, with no children. She is employed as a School Librarian in an elementary school, a position she has held for four years. Prior to that she was an elementary teacher for eight years.

She describes her initial choice of teaching as a case of choosing from a "narrow range of possibilities" known to her when she was young. She had eventually left classroom teaching because "her nerves couldn't take it." She had then considered other types of work but didn't feel qualified for anything else and finally elected to do a Diploma course as a School Librarian. She was familiar with the work and thought it was a way both "to salvage" her prior education and experience and to retain the benefits of a good salary and vacation time.

She prefers the Librarian's position to classroom teaching but continues to be "vaguely dissatisfied" and wonders, still, if "maybe there's something better." This course, she felt, might "help" by providing information about other job possibilities which would allow her to use her education and work experience. She hoped "to be given some direction as to where to go" in looking for other kinds of work.

Janet is in her mid-thirties, married, with no children. She has been teaching elementary school for the past ten years and finds herself increasingly dissatisfied with her work. Two years ago, when she first came to the province, she did look at other job possibilities but found that either she would need more training or the salary drop from teaching was more than she wanted to take. She had returned to teaching but the dissatisfaction grew and she describes herself now as feeling that she is "a poor teacher this year. I just don't have the oomph that I did several years back."

She works in the same school as Carol and, with her, decided that the Transitions course might give "some direction" in dealing with their job dissatisfaction. Janet was especially interested in having the testing done in order to find out what her "interests and aptitudes are." "I want some direction, to know the different kinds of jobs that would be suitable for me with the interests I have."

Jenny[*] is in her mid-thirties, married, with two teenage children in school. Since her marriage she has not worked outside the home. She directs her energies toward establishing and maintaining "a quiet, calm home" for her family and is, on the whole, satisfied with the life she leads. However, she sometimes wonders if she "should" work outside the home; if, perhaps she is "just in a comfortable rut." She is also aware that her children will soon leave home and that something could conceivably change her situation in the future so that she might "be forced" to get a job.

She was unable to identify the kind of work that would appeal to her although she investigated a number of different courses offered by post-secondary institutions in Capital City. She had tried unsuccessfully the past Spring to have some vocational testing done so was particularly interested in the course because it offered the testing. She hoped that the testing would "point me in a direction so that I can say I'm neither comfortable in my role or I've just become too secure in my role and it's time for a change."

4. THE SETTING

I pushed open the door of the Garden City High School the night of October 9th. "All School Visitors Report to the Office" ordered the sign facing me. As I walked down the hallway the institutional greens and beiges, the metal lockers, the posters advertising a school dance, brought back memories of being a high school student.

Two days before I had received a phone call from Stan, the course instructor, confirming that the class would meet that night for the first time. "In the High School" he had said but as I stood in the silent rotunda there were no indications of which room we were to meet in.

"You here for a night class?" the man down the hall called out. He was swabbing the floor with a large string mop. "Straight down the stairs to the end of that hallway," he said, pointing. I thanked him and stepped through the wet puddle on the floor apologetically. In the hall I met another woman and Stan - whom I recognized because we had met before. Stan was just unlocking a classroom right beside his office. Flicking on the lights, he told us to go ahead and take a seat while he went into his office.

The banks of fluorescent lights lit a rather drab, rectangular room. The walls were painted a neutral beige, the furniture was blond-coloured wood and green metal, a green chalkboard ran along one of the long walls, while opposite it was a large wood storage cupboard and a beige bulletin board upon which a few small pamphlets were hung. The only bright colour in the room was a patch of emerald green carpet covering a small, raised platform in a window alcove facing the hallway. There was no other window in the room. In front of the chalkboard was a large teacher's desk and a lectern. Facing this were about thirty, individual table-desks aligned in six rows. The chairs were up-ended on these desks.

The other woman and I moved to the center of the room, lifted down two chairs, and seated ourselves so that we were directly in front of, but two seats back from, the desk and lectern.

"It's a rush to get supper over with and get here by seven," she commented. "Especially right now. I've got these workmen doing renovations in the kitchen and there's sawdust and tools all over the place."

As we chatted about the renovations she was having done, two others came in and seated themselves behind us. We exchanged names and the one who sat behind me, Jenny, asked if any of us had seen the film on Cable TV.

"I did try," Ruth volunteered, "but I couldn't get any picture, just the sound. Anyway, it sounded really interesting. It was called Pack Your Own Chute."

"Pack Your Own Chute!" Jenny exclaimed. "What's that got to do with this course?"

"Well," Ruth explained, "it's got to do with trying something new, overcoming your fears, at least that's what I got out of it."

"Oh," Jenny laughed. "I thought I must be in the wrong course. I don't even like flying, let alone parachuting!"

The conversation proceeded somewhat haltingly, punctuated by periods of silence. There was an air of uneasiness and anticipation. Three others came into the room and seated themselves at the back of the row closest to the door. They, too, sat quietly. Although they were all dressed casually, mostly in slacks and sweaters, they had evidently taken some time to dress up for the evening. Their make-up was carefully applied and their hair "done."

Stan stuck his head in the door, counted us, and then commented that we would wait a few minutes more for the other three who were expected. At 7:15 he came back in and positioned himself behind the lectern.

"We won't wait any longer," he announced. "The first exercise we'll do tonight will be to try to get to know each other. Through this you will find out that your problems aren't unique. I want you to pair up and talk to each other about your family background, hobbies, activities and so on. But the focal question should be why are you here? What are your needs? How do you expect to gain these from the course? Each person will then introduce the other to the entire class."

Jenny, behind me, giggled nervously.

"It's a good thing in this society to get some experience speaking publicly," Stan said, looking at her.

"You mean we're supposed to tell what the other person needs?" one of the women (later introduced as Carol) asked. Her face bore a skeptical expression.

"Yes," Stan replied. "I kill two birds with one stone here. I jot down what your needs are. Then I have a better idea of what is wanted and if, at the end, your needs have been met. We can address what you need. For example, resume writing could be included if people wanted it. O.K. Pair up."

The Transitions course had begun.

Over the next two and one-half month period the class met for nearly three hours on Thursday evenings. We would apologetically track over the wet hallway floors on our way to the classroom where greetings were exchanged, coats piled on a table by the door, and a temporary encampment in a forest of up-ended chair legs cleared at the centre of the room.

Despite the fact that we shared that classroom for several hours each week, we became little more than an aggregate of individuals. Names were rarely used. Few of the women, in fact, came to know more than one or two of the others' names. In interviews outside the class, as they recounted class events, most referred to the others by physically describing them - "the one with the curly hair." There was confusion about each other's present situation. One thought all but two were employed in the work-force; another thought all but two were at home raising families. Frequently I had to deflect curious and leading questions about what the others were thinking and feeling.

In the classroom we sat in rows, waiting for Stan to arrive and occupy the space at the front of the room which he never left - a delimited rectangle between chalkboard, desk, and lectern.

From this space Stan orchestrated the scripted activities which made up the Changing course "package": three sessions devoted to "the self as individual," two to "the self in relationships," four to "the self as worker." Through this outline he pursued his intentions of "stimulating awareness" and "developing confidence," searching for the evidence which would indicate to him that he had "got some heads going."

From their space in the centre of the room, the nine women took their part in the activities: taking notes, doing assignments, asking questions, discussing points in small groups, occasionally expressing a view. They, too, pursued their intentions - to render this scripted set of activities into something personally meaningful.

This pursuit of intentions: on the one hand, the instructor's desire to raise questions and stimulate awareness; on the other, the participants' desire to answer questions and make decisions, arose from perspectives each brought into the classroom. In the classroom these were never completely reconciled and the Transitions course became an experience marked by an encounter of perspectives.

The description of this encounter is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA: THE EXPERIENCE

The intent of the previous chapter was to provide the reader with some background to the first meeting of the Transitions course on October 9th. This chapter will provide a descriptive account of the participants' course experience.

This description has been ordered chronologically and around the major theme: an encounter of perspectives. It is suggested that the participants' experience is very much an account of discrepant perspectives - the personal pragmatic perspective of the participants encountering the abstract academic perspective embodied in the course curriculum.

This theme is elaborated throughout the chapter and illustrated by descriptions of both class sessions and interviews with one of the participants, Jenny, the one whom I had chosen to interview most frequently.

Based on field notes recorded during the class sessions, a number of the sessions are described. It should be noted that these descriptions, headed by date, do not include all the events that took place in that session. Rather, an attempt has been made to select from the notes what would give the reader an understanding of the nature of the session - the type of format used, the content presented and the kind of interaction in the class. Those events which figured in the womens' later reflections are also included. To avoid repetition not all the sessions are described, although an idea of their nature is provided.

The interviews with Jenny are similarly abridged to focus on those thoughts and feelings about the class sessions which were most salient at each interview. In some respects her interpretations were unique but in others they expressed themes common to all the participants and it is these which form the focus for this description of the course experience.

1. AN ENCOUNTER OF PERSPECTIVES

When the nine women arrived in the Transitions classroom on the night of October 9th they encountered a set of activities which had been pre-scripted, a curriculum Stan had developed to provide a "proper, sequential order of things."

This curriculum "package" embodied a particular perspective which made certain assumptions about the situation and needs of the participants and what the goals of the educational activity should be.

The primary goal of this curriculum was to stimulate awareness. Stan had selected activities which would raise questions, encourage speculation and provoke new insights into their present situation. He expected them to leave the course with a broader awareness of, and confidence to resolve, the identity crisis he assumed them to be in.

But the participants entered the class with their own definition of their situation and needs and with a different goal. Their goal was to find direction; their assumption was that the classroom activities would help to answer their questions in a directly relevant manner; their expectation was that the course should have practical benefits to them.

Figure 2 summarizes the womens' entering expectations. Their common act of enrollment had arisen from asking some questions about a future path for themselves. In its most frequently expressed terms, they were "looking for direction." How they expected to find that direction, however, varied along dimensions of specificity and

Ellen	"I'm not really planning to work for at least 5 years but the course caught my eye. I thought it's sort of expanding your outlook ... a self-improvement kind of thing ... we'll see what I get out of this."
Barbara	"I feel I need some set time to reassess my life goals ... It's an opportunity for self-awareness,.....to examine the question can I do the things I wanted to do all along and are they as important as ever?"
Marie	"I don't really know what I want. I know I want something more than what I'm doing. So I just thought maybe somebody who was trained in that field could maybe steer you or give hints to know which direction to take."
Ruth	"I'm looking for some direction in making a change ... whether a change would, in fact, be beneficial or would be possible for me as an individual; whether I have traits, abilities, or aptitudes that would gear me for some other type of work."
Sandra	"I want to start preparing myself now for work. I want the opportunity to talk with other people, get some feedback, take a look. Mainly I just want to know that I'm going in the right direction."
Jenny	"I'm hoping that the testing will point me in a direction so that I can say I'm either really comfortable in my role or I've just become too secure in my role and it's time for a change."

Figure 2: The Participants' Entering Expectations

(..... continued)

Anne	"The secretarial course gives me a start. But I want to know more. I want to know my potential. I want to know if I could be in a really different type of field and be good at it."
Carol	"I'm still not really happy in my job. But where do you go to try to change your job? I'm hoping to get some direction to find out about new lines of work, what else I could do with my education and experience."
Janet	"I just don't feel like I'm a good teacher anymore. I want to know where my interests are, whether I'm capable of doing some particular jobs. I'm hoping he can help me locate something else or guide me in the right direction."

Figure 2: The Participants' Entering Expectations

urgency.

Ellen was most diffuse in her expectations. Describing herself as unable to make any significant changes for several years yet, she was the one participant who entered the course with the expectation that "anything she got out of it" would be fine.

At the other end of the continuum were those like Carol and Janet who wanted to make a career change quickly and who defined their needs as informational in nature, focused on an assessment of vocational alternatives.

But underlying these individual variations, there was a common interpretive process in which all the participants were engaged. This was the ongoing translation of the curriculum into something personally meaningful. Theirs' was not a disinterested stance where theory and speculation was of interest in and of itself. Rather, they were very pragmatically looking for answers which would help them find direction.

Their pragmatic perspective encountered in the classroom a much more theoretical and speculative perspective embedded in the curriculum. The intentions of the instructor were frequently at odds with their own interests. It was this discrepancy of perspective and intention which continuously characterized the Transitions course experience.

Figure 3 presents the major elements of these two perspectives, that of the participants and of the instructor.

For purposes of this discussion, the concept of perspective and its analysis into components has been based on the definitions

	Participant Perspective	**Instructor Perspective**
Goal:	To find direction	To stimulate awareness
Definition of Situation:	I need help to make a decision. The classroom will meet my personal needs for self-assessment/clarification information.	The students need new awareness of their situation and confidence to resolve their identity change positively.
Actions:	I will engage in classroom activities which are relevant and meaningful. I will interact with others in a non-threatening, relaxed manner.	I will provide philosophical and psychological devices to stimulate personal insights. I will structure and lead the interaction.
Criteria of Judgment:	I should gain practical benefits from my participation.	Students should evidence new awareness and confidence.

Figure 3: Participant and Instructor Perspectives

provided by Becker et al in Making the Grade. (1968)

As it is defined there, a perspective is "a coordinated set of ideas and actions a person uses in dealing with some problematic situation. The ideas can be seen by an observer to be one of the possible sets of ideas which might form the underlying rationale for the person's actions and are seen by the actor as providing a justification for acting as he does." (Becker et al, 1968:5)

Analyzed into its components, a perspective minimally includes a generalized goal, a definition of the situation, actions, and criteria of judgment.

The generalized goal provides a point of view about why people are in the situation and what they may reasonably expect from it. The definition of the situation describes the character of the situation by which importance is attached to certain of its features. The actions are a specification of those activities which one "may properly and sensibly engage in." These are realistic actions in that situation, given the character ascribed to it. Criteria of judgment are those standards of value applied in the situation. (1968:29-30)

In Making the Grade the student perspective the authors described was developed over time through interaction in the college situation and became the common frame of reference within which consensus and communication could occur. But in this study of the Transitions classroom that convergence into a single common frame of reference did not really occur. Rather, the perspectives which each held upon entry into the classroom situation remained almost wholly intact. Lacking the shared frame of reference, the experience was marked by divergent definitions, actions, and judgment of value.

From the participants' viewpoint, the experience was one of translating from the "academic" to the "everyday" world, rendering the personal from the intellectual, reconciling possibilities with realities, bridging gaps between questions and answers.

Session One: October 9

"O.K. Take your seats in the centre of the room and get your notebooks out. I'll give you the course outline," Stan said as he rose from behind the desk at the front where he had been sitting.

With this instruction he ended the introduction exercise that had occupied the first hour of the session. Through it we had been scattered in groups of two or three at the four corners of the room, Stan having decided, in response to the suggestion from Jenny that we sit closer together, that that wasn't necessary. "We could all hear each other." Three others had arrived just after we had paired up so that there were now ten of us plus Stan.

The introductions of each of the women had quickly fallen into a formula. This is Jenny/Carol/Ruth, she is a housewife/librarian/nurse, she is wondering whether she should make a change and what that should be. Stan had followed most of these up with a few clarifying questions or comments. "Have you considered other types of librarian's jobs?" "So, you're interested in exploring goal possibilities?" As he pursued these questions he jotted notes on a piece of paper in front of him. Other than to answer any such questions, we all sat listening to the introductions and exchanging tentative smiles across the room.

I'd like the chance to talk more with them," I thought as we all moved to sit in rows facing his desk. As I opened my notebook, it occurred to me that he hadn't yet introduced himself. He never did.

For the next hour and a half Stan remained standing at the chalkboard, filling it with words and diagrams to illustrate the course outline and an introduction to basic psychology. He ran through the course outline quickly.

"So this course is one where we look at all these aspects of self: as individual, in relationships, and as worker. Any questions as to the general outline?"

There was no response.

"Anything you think should be added?"

"How do you know if you're happy at your job?" Marie queried.

"Assumptions are our biggest handicap." Stan replied, "we don't give ourselves or our jobs realistic credit. We really have to come to understand ourselves and what makes us happy."

"Could you be in a rut and not know that you are?" Jenny asked.

Stan grinned at her. "Sure, happy ignorance, right? You're just being happy in the pond?"

"Yes. Do you think by the end of the course a person could recognize this?"

"Yes," he replied as he turned back to the board and began to draw on it a three-column table. "I want you to draw up an Expectations Table like this with a column for Self, Relationships, and Worker." He illustrated this on the board. "In each column write down what do I want to see happen in each of these areas. Under worker, for example, what goals? Do I want to enhance, develop, secure, explore goals?"

We began to copy down the table. Stan stood silently for a few minutes then said, "This isn't meant to be academic. If I'm getting over your heads let me know. O.K. Do the rest of that at home. Now let's turn to a basic introduction to psychology."

He turned back to the board, erased what was there, and began another series of diagrams to illustrate his points. As he talked he paced along the front of the room, gesturing with his hands, interspersing his presentation with "O.K.?", "any questions?" The class members settled into a variety of postures; slumped back in their chair, arms akimbo, or leaning forward with chin in hand. A few wrote steadily, copying from the board. Two, Barbara and Marie, asked questions. His replies were lengthy and discursive. At times his arms chopped through the air and his voice would rise to stress the importance of some point.

"If people are raised in the same family with the same heredity and environment, how is it that they can be so different?" Barbara queried at one point, gesturing toward the board where he had sketched out a model of the interaction of heredity and environment on self.

"The Existentialists have a beautiful answer to this," Stan replied, grinning. "They say never mind the past, you are here now. Accept that state and the anxiety that comes with it. You are a creature of your present time. You are responsible for yourself." Carrying on with the notion of personal responsibility in relationships and therapy, he began to talk rapidly and increasingly emphatically.

"Dependency and pampering are the worst social diseases we have," he declared. "If nothing else is achieved by all this it is to draw home this point: I can't help you. Psychiatrists, psychologists can't help you. You are the agent of your success. When success come it comes because you want it, you develop new expectations." He stopped abruptly and looked at us. "Now, on to development."

At quarter to ten Stan glanced at the clock. Behind him the board was a jumble of lines and words and diagrams illustrating Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Plato's Allegory of the Cave.

"Guess we'd better stop," he said. "O.K. We've sort of fantasized, gone through a few models. The main thing is not to take it as academic truth. It's meant to get you to think, to become aware. The questions - What am I? Who am I? What does this mean to me? - These are the subjective evaluations to balance against the objective evaluations of the tests. That's it then. See you next week and remember, seven o'clock." He turned back to erase the board.

We got up, stretching, and readied to leave. Marie approached Stan and exchanged a few words with him. "I really enjoyed it." I heard her say to him.

I walked out with Marie, Janet and Carol.

"Boy, that's the most my head has worked in a long time!" Marie exclaimed, smiling.

"It reminded me of university," Janet remarked.

Carol said nothing. Her face bore the same skeptical expression I had noticed earlier in the evening.

Session Two: October 16

I shifted in my seat and glanced at the clock at the front of the room. 8:15. Stan had been lecturing for over an hour on "The Power Cycle," a model of identity change in which one "uprooted old identities" and went through a "period of alienation." A few minutes ago he had said he wanted to present "an existential model of the authentic response of alienation" and was now drawing a large chart on the board, referring to notes in his hand as he labelled the columns with terms: existential givens, existential anxiety, authentic response, neurosis.

I looked over at Jenny who sat in the row beside me. She was turned slightly to one side on her chair, looking out the classroom door. I had chatted with her briefly before the class began. She had volunteered then that what she had "gotten out of" the first session was that "I wasn't alone, others felt the way I did too. But I was getting tired out the last hour. What he was saying didn't seem that important." Jenny, then Anne beside her, and I yawned almost simultaneously. The rest sat impassively, watching him complete the diagram on the board.

The chart completed on the board, Stan turned back to the class. "Alienation, then, is the crucial point from which you begin to grow. From this alienation you can either go authentic..." he stopped and grinned at us. "You're learning all sorts of verbiage in this class, right? Well, authentic simply means genuine. Are you still with me or is this getting too deep? The idea is to reflect on yourself as we go through this. It's a matter of becoming aware."

"I know I'm using a lot of academic terms," he continued somewhat apologetically. "I don't know any other way to do this. If you don't understand something please ask questions, jump up and down."

Marie put up her hand and asked him to clarify the terms psychotic and neurotic. Having answered this in some detail, Stan carried on with an explanation of the differences between the authentic and inauthentic response to alienation, filling in the chart on the board as he talked. Just before nine he completed the chart and returned to the original "Power Cycle" model still sketched on the other side of the board.

"If the authentic response is followed, a reidentification occurs and a new cycle begins. What this is saying is that only through crises do we grow. These crises are not negative. Identities may need to be sloughed off; it is necessary to shed identities from season to season in your life. So your second look at life - if you use this model - is to see your turmoil and crises as positive things. From this you grow. Even if you fail, it's O.K. Failure is the result of trying." His voice had begun to rise and his gestures became more expansive. He paced in front of the board as he began to talk about judgment at death, the "hell" of realizing you had taken no risks through life.

Turning to us he inquired, "You know the Parable of the Talents?" He smiled. "You're getting some preaching now," and went on to recount the parable.

In a final gesture at the board, he concluded his lecture. "We're guaranteed at least a couple of acute stages in life when old identities must be positively disintegrated. This is not an absolute but it seems to show a process in life. This is only _a_ model that's trying to explain life but it makes sense to me."

"What happens if you don't go through trauma? Some people apparently don't have trauma," Marie asked.

"They probably just don't show it," Stan replied. "Everyone goes through this process of positive disintegration but may not be aware of it themselves."

"O.K. I want you to do another assignment. On the basis of this model I want you to map yourself in this cycle, locate yourself, describe the events in the recent past which have preceded this, and what you want to follow. This will be handed in to me."

"Oh, no!" Jenny burst out, turning the pages of her notebook abruptly, an annoyed look on her face.

Stan looked anxiously at her. "It's not that I want to pry into your personal life," he explained. "This is the subjective evaluation that I will be combining with your test results to develop a profile for you. Because you have to write this down it will force you to really think about yourself."

Jenny kept her eyes on her notebook and said nothing more.

"How many of you can see yourself in this model?" he asked.

About three-quarters of the class raised their hands.

"Well, you can use another model if you want but I would like it to be cyclical," he said in a conciliatory tone. "If you really don't want to do this assignment you can decide to give me some similar information about yourselves in another way."

"Before we leave tonight, would you like to arrange to have a break during the class?" he asked.

The suggestion was greeted with enthusiasm and arrangements were quickly agreed upon to bring in our own cups and beverages and to use an electric kettle Stan offered to bring in.

"Can we smoke during the break?" Jenny asked.

"No," Stan replied. "The only room you can smoke in in the school is the staff room and they won't let us use that. Sorry. Oh, and by the way, will you please replace the chairs on the desks before you leave. The custodians want the room in order for the morning."

"It'll be good to have a break," several commented as we left that night. "Guess we'll have to sneak into the washroom for a smoke, hey?"

Interview with Jenny: October 21

"Boy, I came marching home after that class, cussin' all the way. Probably wore off a couple of pounds I walked so fast," Jenny said, laughing.

It was five days after the second session and she and I had just sat down at her dining room table, coffee cups in hand. Jenny was the first of the participants I had arranged to meet with outside the class setting.

"I'm interested in finding out what kinds of thoughts and feelings people have as they go through the Transitions course." I had explained on the phone a few days earlier.

Her response had been immediate and generous. "Sure, come on over Tuesday. I'll have the coffee pot on."

"What had upset you so much?" I asked her.

"Well, you know ... how do I put this?" She paused to think. "Maybe if he had said to us, ladies, you all seem to have a problem making some kind of decision in your life and here is what we have found is a good way to solve these problems. First of all, you have to analyze yourself and that's called identity, OK? And explained a little bit about that. Now you've come to uprootedness and that may lead to identity crisis and maybe that's what you're all into now. That would be good. But, really, the way he's explaining these things! And when you've got a blackboard full of this jargon - half of it I don't even know why he uses it. Why can't things just be straighforward?"

"I came that close to putting up my hand and saying I don't want to sound chippy but why are you telling us all this? I mean, who cares? Now, if I were going to get into Psychology then maybe I should know about everybody's theory and I should know the terminology so that I would sound good when I'm talking to my colleagues, but right now ..." she trailed off and took a sip from her cup.

"What would stop you from putting up your hand and asking that question?" I queried.

"Oh, for one thing, I think I was maybe a little embarrassed or scared, you know?" She giggled. "Like, I felt that I already blew it when I said oh, no! when he asked for the assignment. Then he looked at me and went on to explain that he's not trying to get into our personal lives or anything. That wasn't upsetting me. I mean I want him to get to know me if I'm going to get any kind of assistance from him. I thought, really, what is that going to tell him about us when he wants us to use the terminology that he uses? Do you know how hard it is if you're not used to that kind of terminology and you're supposed to use it?" she exclaimed indignantly.

"I think I figured because we're all supposed to be feeling the same sort of things and when we started the class - remember? - it was so we could get to know each other. I thought oh, great! We're going to be a bunch of ladies who can sit and discuss things and get it together. But after the second class I figured it sounds like I'm in a Psychology course. I didn't mean for that to happen, you know?"

"Well, maybe it will change," she remarked as I prepared to leave. "I'm hoping that with the videotape business that we're supposed to have the next class, things will change. Maybe then we'll sit and discuss it; we'll discuss it. If it doesn't happen I think I'm going to have to start putting up my hand and maybe queering myself out a few times. But, gol darn, that's not what I'm there for."

2. ENTERING THE ACADEMIC REALM

> "The reason I use those models and all that sort of pictorial stuff is simply because I'm trying to stimulate thinking along those lines ... It's like the idea of looking at yourself in a mirror and making some sort of judgment about yourself. They provide a mirror, a reflecting device."
>
> (Stan: 5/2)

> "I figured it sounds like I'm in a Psychology course. I didn't mean for that to happen, you know."
>
> (Jenny: 21/10)

When you come into a course looking for "straightforward answers" as Jenny had, two evenings of lectures in Psychology were an unexpected development, a jarring of expectations. These sessions weren't making sense to her and she was embarrassed, resentful and puzzled. How was one to find answers from "a blackboard full of jargon?"

But Stan wasn't intending to give them answers. The purpose of these lectures was to "stimulate thought," "to become aware" of universal processes in life. He was, in essence, bidding them to enter the academic and theoretical realm of his models and parables and to speculate on their meaning.

The leap from the everyday world of problems and decisions to this academic realm of the classroom was not an easy one for the participants nor were they all willing to suspend their practical concerns for this journey into theory.

The first barrier was the discomfort engendered by the formality of the lecture format, by "being in a classroom:"

Q: What were you thinking and feeling during the first sessions?
S: What am I doing here! (laughs)
Q: Is that what you were asking yourself?
S: Yeah! Oh, gad, it was so hard to get back into the classroom. It wasn't exactly what I had thought it would be - it was very academic, I suppose. It's a strange feeling going back after all those years, sitting in the classroom.
Q: What are the cues that, to you, mean being in a classroom rather than, say, a group?
S: Well, you're sitting there behind this little desk and your hands get all clammy and you're waiting for the teacher to come in, and nobody talks or chews gum! (laughs) You sit down and immediately all those things flash through your head - all the conditioning you know? It was just everybody sitting there in rows and then the teacher walking in and standing up there at the front of the room.
Q: And what do you mean when you say it was very academic?
S: I remember it from University when they come in and use these huge, big words. Although I suppose it is relating to real life, it's not everyday conversation. It's mainly the language that he was using; it was actually quite foreign.

(Sandra: 19/1)

Being in the classroom was different from your everyday world where you sat around and discussed things. In the classroom you had "to concentrate," "to absorb" the ideas he was "throwing out at you." You were no longer "a bunch of ladies" but, rather, students who had to put up your hands to ask questions.

The foreigness of the language being used was a salient cue in defining this as "the classroom." It was also a second barrier to their participation in this academic speculation. It was his terminology, not their language.

Stan was aware that the language he used could be a barrier. He realized that he might be "over their heads" and he apologized for his "verbiage" but he saw it as an inescapable part of using academic models. Since he was committed to using these models, the matter simply became one of sufficient repetition:

> S: "I guess the question to me has been can I simplify this so it reaches all of them, so there is none of that contamination in the language that distorts. But I guess I've come to the point of saying well, I speak this way; I guess we academics speak in a certain manner. I get up in the classroom and I have certain models and there is a certain verbiage attached to them and I guess I felt, well, I might as well give it to them in a total package ... If it is confusing I'm hoping I can explain it often enough that people know what I'm dealing with".
>
> (Stan: 5/2)

So it was left largely to the participants to immerse themselves in this unfamiliar language and to try to keep it from "going over their heads".

The payoff for this effort, as far as Stan was concerned, was a greater insight into themselves. He had seen this happen before and it had proven to him that these academic models served an important purpose and justified their continued presence in his curriculum:

> S: "I've had, you know, women coming to me and saying I haven't slept for the last week since you presented that model. It's just really disturbed me because for the first time in my life I really see where I'm at.
>
> Now when I get that kind of feedback - those are actual words - it really puts the old, well, tingle in the system. Because the model is something I've created thinking that's the way it is for all of us.

> And I haven't really ever received any absolutely negative response to that model. I've had comments saying sure, it was limited, I don't know where it's supposed to get me, I've never been in crisis ...
>
> But then the question is, why are you here? I mean, something must have disturbed you. Something has motivated you to come here and what is it?"
>
> (Stan: 5/2)

From Stan's perspective, then - one he felt had been justified by experience - everyone in the course came out of a disturbance in their life which could be understood as a regularly recurring identity crisis. The models he presented could help them understand the dimensions and nature of this disturbance and, with this awareness, move on to resolve it with greater confidence.

But it was the discrepancy in definitions of their situation which became the third barrier for many of the participants. If you didn't define yourself as being in crisis, if you didn't see self-awareness as necessarily of direct benefit, then there was little interest in engaging in the exercise he offered - particularly if the language of the exercise itself was confusing. From these participants' perspective it wasn't that he was "over their heads" so much as he was completely outside their heads. It just didn't "click":

> C: "The kinds of things we're discussing now - the inner self and all that - just don't seem to be clicking with me ... Like I know a lot of things about myself but there's no way that just discussing them is going to change it or help me select a career because of that ... I guess what I'm really tired of is just philosophizing constantly and never getting anything concrete. The big thing I'm looking forward to is the last part - the testing."
>
> (Carol: 4/11)

Carol was one of those participants where entering focal interest was narrowly defined. She wanted something "concrete" like the testing and she simply rejected Stan's bid to speculate on her inner self.

At the other end of the continuum was Barbara whose entering expectations were much broader and who expressed interest in "an opportunity for self-awareness." The practical value of Stan's exercises seemed evident because their interests coincided. She wanted to think about things. He wanted her to think about things:

> B: "You know, you don't put in thirty or forty years of living and twenty years of raising a family without having experiences that happen to you everyday. But, because you're so busy, you haven't really got time to stop and think: what happened today? How does this fit into the plan of things? And when you go through the exercises we've been going through you just think well, my god, look at that. If that isn't exactly what happened and I knew it was. I just couldn't necessarily verbalize it, or put a name to it, or explain it, or accept it, and now all these things seem a little bit easier ... It's good in that way, that it's providing leadership. I find it has been very good in helping me to think."
>
> \- (Barbara: 30/10)

The power and value of the "reflecting devices" Stan held up to them were individually interpreted by the participants' interests. Some, like Barbara, chose to look into them and found clarification. Some, like Carol, were uninterested altogether in such reflections. Others, like Jenny, found the obscurity of the language rendered them opaque.

Session Three: October 23

It was just before seven and four of us sat quietly watching Stan fiddle with a video-machine at the front of the room. Having adjusted the volume and picture, he turned to greet us and, commenting that we would wait a few more minutes for the others, left the room.

"So what did I miss last week?" Carol asked, looking at the rest of us.

"You got two hours?" Jenny replied, laughing.

"All these notes," Ellen said, holding up her notebook and thumbing through the pages.

Carol grimaced. "Was it theory or practice?"

Ellen, Jenny, and I looked at each other. "I guess you'd say it was theory, wouldn't you?"

"Oh." Carol stated flatly and let the matter drop.

The others began to arrive and greetings were exchanged. Stan re-entered the room and started the class by reminding us that the session next week would be cancelled as he would be out of town.

"Tonight I want to show you two films which you will be discussing in groups. The first is called "Pack Your Own Chute", it was the one that was on Cable T.V. if any of you caught it. As you watch the film ask yourself these questions: What is the one major thing that appears to be the obstacle to human development, as portrayed in this film? How does it suggest you can improve or get to where you want to go? How does this film describe your own life?" He started the video-machine and left the room while the film played.

The film was about half an hour long and dealt with the theme of overcoming fear and taking responsibility for one's own actions. There was no talking as we concentrated on the film. A few occasionally wrote in their notebooks.

When it had finished Stan said, "I've been doing most of the talking up to now. I'd like to get into groups and discuss the questions I gave you." He gestured toward us to indicate two groups and we shifted our chairs to form two circles. Stan plugged in the kettle, telling us to help ourselves when the water had boiled, and again left the room.

In our group of four Anne led the discussion, reading out the questions and volunteering her answers to them. When she came to the last question - How does this film describe your own life? - she said, "I could really see a lot of my life in that film."

"Well, I couldn't see it relating to me," Jenny said emphatically. "I'm not afraid. The reason I'm here is because I don't know what job I might like and even if I want to take a job."

"I was afraid of everything two years ago," Anne continued. "Could I make it on my own? Could I support myself? But now I just feel that there's nothing I can't do - if I want to badly enough."

"Do you mean we're supposed to relate this to our whole lives?" Jenny exclaimed. She shifted abruptly in her seat.

Anne continued to relate some of her experiences in the past two years. Carol sat quietly listening and occasionally nodded. "Sounds like you've really built up your self-confidence," she commented to her.

"Did you think the film related to you?" I asked Carol.

"No, she replied with a wry grin. "In fact, right now I'm wondering what I'm doing here."

After the break, during which we had continued to sit in our groups and talk quietly together about a number of different topics, Stan led us through a further discussion of the film, responded to questions raised about the model presented last week, and then introduced the second film.

"This is about the spiritual, mystical self. Ask yourself the question, what is challenge and competition about in our personal lives?"

"Dawnflight" was a shorter, almost lyrical, exploration of the same theme as the first film: confronting fears. When it ended Stan said, "I hope you people were able to discern the meaning of all that?"

There was no response.

"Who was the enemy the young man saw?" he asked.

"Himself," several people volunteered.

"Right!" he exclaimed. "That film was saying that we have to confront ourself in order to integrate ourselves into a meaningful whole." He continued to briefly discuss the spiritual dimension of life and then glanced at the clock.

"Well, we have a few minutes to talk. Are there any questions about the first three classes? We're now at the finish of the first part, the self as individual. Next time we'll start on the self in relationships. Have you gained some insights into yourself?"

Several nodded their heads.

"Could you recommend any books we could read?" Marie asked.

"Well, I guess I could bring in a reading list that was prepared a few years back," Stan replied. "But the stuff I've prepared for this course tries to encompass many approaches. It's an attempt to sensitize people, to provide models that may be of use."

As Jenny and I walked out together at the end of the class, she said, "Well, I feel better about this class than I did the last one. I just made up my mind that I wasn't going to take it all so seriously."

"What do you mean, not take it so seriously?"

"Oh, I've rationalized, I guess. But I mean I'm just not going to take everything as gospel. Some things I just don't agree with."

Session Four: November 6

"Are there any questions about anything covered in the first three weeks?" Stan asked.

No one responded.

"Tonight we start on group exercises," he said and began to pass out a number of xeroxed sheets.

The sheets contained the instructions for a "Decision by Consensus" exercise which involved imagining ourselves to be stranded on the moon and needing to agree on the relative importance of a list of supplies which we would take on our trip back to a "mother ship." He instructed us to read the decision-making rules carefully and then to rank-order the list individually before we formed groups.

"You may feel, as women, that this is more of a man's problem. That's just your conditioning coming out," he said with a grin. "You should be able to extract from your exposure to magazines and so on the kind of things that are important to solving this."

There was silence as we completed our ranking of the items. Stan had us number off by one and two to create two groups.

"Sit in a circle," he suggested. "I'll give you until 8:30 to complete this and then we'll have a break."

Since Ruth was away, there was one group of five and one of four. Marie, Carol, Jenny and I settled ourselves around a couple of desks we abutted together on the opposite side of the room. We started by comparing our ranking of the items.

"Well, at least we all agree that tanks of oxygen are the most important item," Marie commented.

"And who says women don't know anything about the moon!" We laughed and set about the task of agreeing on the ordering of the other items. There were no serious disputes between us and the task of arriving at consensus went smoothly as we discussed each item, contributing what we knew about the moon's surface, brainstorming the possible utility of some of the items on the list, and joking with each other about our ability as astronauts. There were frequent bursts of laughter from the other group, too. Stan, meanwhile, stayed at his desk at the front reading but also frequently looking up to observe us.

During the break we continued to sit together in our groups, completing the exercise and chatting.

"It's fun doing this kind of group exercise, isn't it?" Jenny commented. "It's more relaxed, you know?"

Stan stood up and went to the board. "I'd like you to get your notebooks out now. I want to give you three models of communication."

"The Power Model is where one person tells or orders the other. The Authority Model is manipulative, where you try to get others to communicate according to your expectations. The Creative Model is where your feedback modifies your communication." He quickly drew the three diagrams on the board as he talked.

Turning to us, he asked, "Which of these models would be the best?"

Several said, "number three."

"No," he replied. "You need all three. That last one cannot be the only functional model. There could be no objectivity with it; it is subjective only. Every organization must have hierarchy and authority."

"Now, there are also three models of leadership style: authoritarian, democratic and laissez-faire." He began to draw these on the board too.

When he had completed a description of the three leadership styles, Janet asked, "What do you want us to do with these models?"

"O.K., that's next," Stan replied. "I want you to do an assignment. Establish a picture of the kind of structure you thought you were part of; the kind of lines of communication in it. Then decide whether you thought each person in the group was a leader or a follower."

The four of us looked questioningly at each other. "Did we have any one leader?"

Jenny put up her hand. "What if a person was only briefly a leader or the leader position changed?" she asked Stan.

"Oh, I think if you reflect on the group you will see that different people did act as leaders," he replied. "I could see that there were leaders in each of the two groups. "Next week," he continued, "you'll get into your same groups and give each other your evaluations of how you feel the others acted in the group."

"Before, we go," Carol interjected, "how does all this fit in with careers?"

"Wait until next week," Stan replied. "We'll deal with the self as workers. You have to know whether you want to be a leader when you make a career choice."

"And this is supposed to tell me?" Carol rejoined in a disbelieving tone.

Jenny put up her hand. "The hardest thing for me in doing your assignments is using your language." She gestured at the board. "I mean, those words are in my vocabulary, yes, but I don't understand how you use them."

"You mean this verbiage is confusing you?" Stan asked her, grinning. He went back over the two kinds of models he had sketched on the board, repeating the definitions of each kind of communication and leadership style. Several people closed their notebooks and began to shift restlessly in their seats. Stan ended his explanation and we prepared to leave.

"Are you feeling anxious about this exercise?" Stan asked.

"Yes," Anne replied with a nervous laugh.

"Well, don't stay away next week because of this," he admonished. "It's very important as it relates to career choice. You have to know whether you want to be a leader and how you function in groups."

Session Five: November 13

"Have you had your hair cut?" Marie asked me as I sat down in the seat in front of her.

"Yes, just the other day," I replied with a grimace and we began to exchange 'horror' stories about hairdressers.

This was the first night there had been much conversation prior to the class beginning. As others arrived they, too, joined us or chatted together about other general topics.

Stan entered the room and started the class by reviewing what he wanted us to do in our groups.

"Feedback of this kind is very important. But it should be non-threatening and supportive. From the classes I've taught," he continued, "it has been apparent to me that there is often a split between what is and what ought to be. Exercises like this one can bring that out. If you aspire to be a leader, but you find you were more of a follower, you can ask yourself why you didn't partake more. What is holding you back in this activity?"

"O.K. Get into groups you were in last week and give each other your feedback. We'll resume as a total group after that and discuss it further."

"If we haven't stalked out of the room yet, hey?" Anne quipped.

Neither Carol nor Jenny had come and as Marie and I moved over to the other side of the room, several from the other group ribbed us. "Afraid of what you were going to tell them, I bet!"

Ruth, who has missed the last session, hesitated and looked at Stan for direction.

"Oh, Mrs. ____," he said. "Why don't you join the small group and they can fill you in what the exercise is about." This was the first time that he had addressed anyone by name.

For the next three-quarters of an hour we remained in our groups. Marie and I exchanged our impressions of how our group had functioned, agreeing that there had been a fairly even balance of communication and that the leadership role had been shared. We discovered that our understanding of the terms Stan had used the week before to describe leadership styles - authoritatian, democratic, and laissez-faire - differed.

"It's a problem when you're dealing in someone else's language," Marie commented., "These terms seem clear when I'm here in the class listening to him but when I get home I'm not sure what they mean."

At eight, Stan, who had sat quietly at the front until then, suggested that we discuss what we had found out in the groups. He led a general discussion and offered his own observations to a few of the women.

"I noticed you were the last to finish the individual part of the exercise," Stan commented to Sandra. "You seemed to take it very seriously. Are you a perfectionist?"

Sandra grinned. "No, I don't think of myself that way but others have told me that."

"Well, you'd probably be the perfect employee," Stan suggested. "You'd be conscientious, wouldn't hassle anyone - the kind of employee an organization wants."

Sandra blushed slightly and nodded her head.

After the break Stan asked us to return to our seats in the centre of the room and to get out the list of personal characteristics we had been asked to prepare several weeks ago.

"Let's see if we can change the atmosphere of the room a bit. I'm going to try to hypnotize you," he joked as he dimmed the lights.

"Look at the first characteristic you've listed. You've chosen this as your most important characteristic. Ask yourself, why is it number one? How big a piece of you is it covering in your total personality?"

The room was silent for a moment.

"Now, what you possess can be taken away from you," he continued. "For example, you may lose your physical attractiveness through an accident or illness. Think of losing the characteristic you've listed as number one. How does that feel? Does its loss have significance to you?"

He continued this way for each of the ten characteristics, posing the same question of how we would feel about losing it, how we would cope without it, then suggesting one by one that we could regain each of them and asking how important this would be. The whole exercise lasted almost half an hour during which there was no other sound in the room than that of Stan's voice.

When he returned to the top of the list, he turned up the lights and said, "Ask yourself how important it was to you to regain each of your charactertistics. Would you now reorder them? Did you find that you had put all your eggs in one basket and didn't like yourself by the time you got down the list?"

We began to prepare to leave.

Sandra looked thoughtful. She said to Stan, "Some of the things that came out of that exercise really surprised me. It was good."

"I'm glad it helped," he replied, smiling.

As Ellen and I walked out together she said, "I couldn't convince myself that I had really lost those characteristics. I didn't put down things like physical looks; I put down things like honesty, and I just couldn't see how I could lose something like that. It seemed a very long exercise."

Interview with Jenny: November 18

"I really felt quite under the weather that day so I decided to stay home," Jenny responded to my comment about missing her at the last class.

"It's too bad I had to miss that one," she continued. "I was really enjoying that group exercise. Fill me in. What happened?"

I recounted the events, what Marie and I had discussed about the group's interaction, some of Stan's comments to a few of the women, and described the exercise we had done with our list of characteristics.

"Let me ask you something," she interjected. "Why do you think he is doing that kind of thing?"

"Well, he said that it was to have us reflect on our characteristics and to decide how important they were to our idea of our self," I tried to explain.

"I can't see that that makes much sense," she said. "Maybe if I were really messed up, questioning absolutely everything, then I would benefit from that, but I'm not. I know myself, my characteristics, and I like myself. What is the point of going through an exercise where you imagine these characteristics are taken away from you? It's just not realistic - in my eyes. I just can't see that they mean anything, so why do it? And, yet, I suppose they do." She paused. "They must mean something or why would we be doing them?"

"Why do you say that?"

"Well, why would be doing them, then?" she repeated.

"You mean Stan must see some meaning to them?" I tried to clarify.

"Yeah," she said tentatively, "I guess so."

"But you, yourself, don't see any meaning to them?"

"No. I guess that's why I get a little irked sometimes and it boils down to it not being realistic to me," she paused then asked, "Did you notice that Carol asked that night what did all this stuff have to do with us, anyway? So maybe we are all feeling the same thing."

"But I find it's interesting because it's new to me, even though he is sometimes over my head."

"When you say over my head, what do you mean?"

"I've thought about that. I think it's basically his way of speaking. In fact, remember I asked him about that two weeks ago? I said the hardest part I'm finding is the terminology and he went over the whole thing again? Well, that wasn't what I was trying to get at. I just wish he could say..." she stopped and thought for a moment.

"No, I guess I don't wish he would; it's up to me, I suppose, in this particular course, to pick up on the words. You see, when he's up there talking and I'm grasping only so much of it and he gives an exercise to do, then, that's where I am ..." She again paused. "I think you know what it boils down to is embarrassment? I don't want to have to do an exercise and talk the way he talks because I can't yet. If I do I'll look stupid. I guess that's the reaction I felt."

"Yet, when we do group things like this moon exercise, I really enjoyed it. We were just talking, we made a few good jokes about it, it was very relaxed. I was wishing that that's how the whole course was - very relaxed and easy sort of thing. Maybe that's what I expected. He's not wrong. I've been wrong. I had it pictured differently."

"I guess I basically like the course because it's something new. And I'll pick up a few things from it, for sure. I don't know what will happen at the very end. I don't expect some miraculous thing to fall over my head and say, Jenny, this is where you're going in life."

"You're not expecting an answer out of this?"

"No."

"Had you before you started the course?"

"I think that I thought maybe it would have been made clear to me..." she stopped and thought briefly. "No," she corrected herself, I guess maybe the only thing would have been that, in myself, I would have seen what is out there and if I wanted to make a choice. Maybe what I was a little more geared for than what I know I am. I know that I can go out and do secretarial work because that's what I've done before. I can clerk in a store; I've done that, too. But there's an awful lot of occupations out there and sometimes I don't know where my interests lie because I've never tried them. So maybe after all these vocational tests something will come up. You know, Jenny, you really can relate to people and maybe you'd better go out and become the next Sigmund Freud!" She laughed. "If it points in a certain direction it would be kind of neat to know that."

"We start the testing next class, by the way," I reminded her.

"Well, I'll be there."

3. THE PERSONAL VS INTELLECTUAL APPROACH

> "We could do a very human-relations approach but for me the intent is to service those ends by talking about them but also to give some structure to what's being done in class ... So, I would like to think that what I'm doing - I'm certainly approaching it from the formal stance of a lecturer - but the intent is just to throw enough little spices around to flavour the soup; to stimulate, to just get them thinking."
>
> (Stan: 5/2)

> "I was wishing that that's how the whole course was - very relaxed and easy sort of thing. Maybe that's what I expected ... I had it pictured differently."
>
> (Jenny: 18/11)

Being stranded on the moon was perceived as more "realistic" or, as Sandra described it with unconscious irony, more "down to earth" than the academic realm of psychological models. It was the change in format to group interaction which characterized these sessions for all the participants. They described them as "fun," "enjoyable," "a social time," "when people started to relax and to get to know each other."

Relaxing and getting to know each other was a key expectation of all of them and it was the unexpected formality and academic nature of the first few sessions which had struck such a discordant note. "I didn't expect to be lectured at!" Janet exclaimed.

But they did expect the group interaction, the opportunity for discussion and dialogue. This confirmation of their expectations and the diminishment of the stress of being a student struggling with alien terminology became the most salient feature of these sessions.

When asked it they would have changed any aspect of the course, all expressed a desire for more "personal" interaction. Carol articulated this well:

> Q: Is there any aspect of the course that you would change?
> C: Well, we were such a small group and each one of us was there for the same purpose, yet we never really got to know each other ... I do think that a lot of people who were there - and even some of them said - It's good to know that other people were having the same feelings as you were; the same feelings of doubt or just that other people are dissatisfied with their jobs.
> Q: What would be the advantages to getting to know each other?
> C: Besides your own feelings, I think that since you're in the same boat you could - who knows? Maybe one girl had heard of someone who was in the same situation as you and maybe she got a job in such and such or she knew of a company who was interested in that type of person.
> Q: Just a sharing of information and ideas?
> C: Yeah, yeah. Even like what he did with us in those first sessions. I guess I wouldn't have had such a bad feeling about it if maybe it had been done in a kind of way a counsellor might do.
> Q: How do you mean?
> C: Well, like if he had come in and talked about how did you feel on your first day of work and everyone give their impressions; someone says they felt such and such and another says my experience was a little bit different and tells their's. This exchange of feelings about the things he was talking about, fear and that, some feedback.
>
> (Carol: 19/1)

If you could get help from each other, if the group itself could be a resource, what did you want or expect from the instructor? Carol suggested it to be more of a "counsellor" but definitions of the instructor's appropriate role were widely varying.

Stan, himself, understood his role to be that of providing leadership and structure to the class and the notion of personal interaction between himself and the participants was not part of this role. His actions in the classroom reinforced a distinction between himself and them.

There was the simple arrangement of space in the classroom. Stan always sat or stood behind a teacher's desk, never in groups with the participants. When the interaction was between him and them, they sat in rows facing him and generally put up their hands before speaking.

Names were rarely, if ever, used and when they were, were usually kept to the formal "Mrs. Smith" rather than first names. Although his professed intention in the initial introductory exercise and the provision of coffee breaks was to encourage interaction between people, he did not join in such interaction; in most cases retiring to his office just outside the classroom.

During group discussion he deliberately stayed out of the groups, feeling that his instructor's role distracted from and distorted the discussion. "I don't want to go in there and start interjecting with my information or adding or doing anything ... OK? It's their group."

He was sensitive to the idea that he might be seen to be "prying into their personal lives." This is how he had interpreted Jenny's objection to the assignment in the second session where he asked them to apply the "Power Model" to themselves.

But, as Jenny described her reaction in the first interview, it wasn't that which had disturbed her. It was the difficulty of expressing herself in "his terminology" which embarrassed her. She wanted to use her own words because she "wanted him to get to know her if he was going to assist her."

The help Stan offered, however, wasn't in the nature of personal engagement with him. It was the content itself - the models and the exercises he structured the classes with - which was going to help them. These would provide the insights. He would be responsible for "flavoring the soup."

For Anne, this approach was characterized as "intellectual" and contrasted with the kind of learning she had engaged in previously which was "on more of a layman's level":

> A: I have got flashes of things that are really interesting to me over the last few weeks but it's much more on an intellectual level than the other stuff I've been through. That was more on an emotional level.
> Q: What do you mean when you say more intellectual level?
> A: Well, uh ... all the other things I've been to - the workshops, speakers and this kind of thing - have been on more of a personal, layman's level; just talking about self and others and relating to others and things like that. But Stan has been working through basic Psychology on more of a teaching level. (Pauses) Like, (in the other things I've gone to) I've learned but only through talking. I was just learning because I was listening to myself and others.
> Q: So, unlike your other learning situations, this one is more what? Structured?
> A: Yes. Sort of a book-learning type.
>
> (Anne: 18/11)

For Anne, real learning could and had occurred for her by "talking" to others. Carol and Jenny shared this view. "This was how you learned," Jenny said, "by discussing things with each other."

But one participant, Marie, valued the input and knowledge of Stan over that of the others since, as an instructor, he "knew" more.

> Q: You say it was important to you that he dealt a lot with Psychology at the beginning.
> M: It was really important. It sort of confirmed a lot of things I was feeling.
> Q: So, if you had gone to a group who got together and talked about their feelings and so on, do you think that some of the same things would have come out for you?
> M: No, not really ... I've got sisters that I talk to and friends - it doesn't do the same thing for you. But when somebody is up there, like, I respected his knowledge, I sort of believed him, but a lot of times I don't believe what others are saying.
> Q: What contributes to your believing him, to respecting his knowledge?
> M: Well, for one thing, I know he's got more than a Grade 8 or 10 education. He must have a degree in something so this means something to me. How shall I put it? I just found he was really easy to listen to and he made a lot of sense to me and I guess maybe, because he did, I wanted to believe him ... I just figure he wouldn't be there if he didn't know what he was talking about.
>
> (Marie: 23/1)

It was this assumption that he must "know what he was talking about" that Jenny kept coming back to in our earlier interview. His authority to structure the class was a given. If she had expected something different she must have been wrong. He must have reasons for selecting these exercises such as the characteristic exercise in the fifth session but the point of it wasn't clear to her and she felt a little "irked" because it wasn't "realistic" to her. But questioning him didn't seem to work either and she felt that by questioning him she was demonstrating a "chippy" attitude.

The authority of an instructor in a class which was to assist to make decisions about finding direction remained puzzling to these participants. Since it wasn't an intellectual decision they saw themselves making, the role of an instructor as "expert" seemed unnecessary. As Jenny described it, this wasn't like a "typing or crocheting class" where things are "cut and dried". This was "personal," having to do with her and she knew herself better than he did. So what could be help her with? The tests were the clearest answer to this.

Testing made sense: The point of the activity was clear. Stan's role was much more clearly defined as a test administrator and vocational counsellor. Testing was what most had come to the class for and all shared the assumption that the results would be personal and could provide something specific or concrete that might, as Jenny said, "point in a certain direction."

Session Six: November 20

"As I said last week, tonight we start the test battery," Stan announced at the beginning of the class. The two you will do tonight have no time-limits, you just work through them at your own speed. The first is a Personal Preference test which should give you some idea of all kinds of individual preferences you should take into account in choosing a type of work."

He passed out a standard test entitled "The Edwards' Personal Preference Schedule" and gave us brief instructions about how to code our answers on the enclosed answer sheet. It consisted of more than two hundred items which suggested two possible reactions to varying situations and asked you to decide which was "most like me" or "most not like me."

"Do this fairly quickly," Stan advised. "It's better to go with your first reaction rather than really think a lot about each item." He asked for questions and when there were none, left the room and went into his office.

There was silence as everyone concentrated on completing the test. As people finished they sat silently. After forty minutes Stan came back in and, seeing that some were finished, instructed us to complete the raw score computations, hand the test sheets in, and take the next test from the front desk. He again went back to his office.

Neither Anne nor Jenny had finished the first test yet and both commented about "how slow" they were and that they had "better speed up."

The second test was the COPS Inventory, a self-scored vocational interest test which asked you to rate how much you would like or dislike doing different job tasks. Two - Ruth and Marie - evidently had trouble understanding the directions about how to complete the test and went into his office. He returned with them to the class and went over the directions for all of us.

"Of course, you realize that there is an intelligence test in here too, whether you can figure out how to do the test," he joked. "Anyway, just take your time with it, you will be able to take these home with you to examine this week."

When the test was scored the results were transferred to an "interest profile" with high school norms being used. The profile was based on broad job categories such as "Science Professional," "Arts, Skilled," and "Technical." A listing of sample job titles was provided for each category.

As we finished the test and the profile we began to talk quietly and compare the results. Marie was highest on "Arts Professional" and "Technical Skilled."

"That's no surprise," she said flatly. "I know where my interests lie and I was ruthless about answering the questions. I either answered like or dislike very much; none of this in the middle stuff. Technical, Skilled. That's the kind of work I would have done if I'd been a man," she said with a laugh.

Ruth sat pensively looking at her profile.

"You look disappointed in your results," Ellen said to her.

"Not really, I guess," she answered somewhat hesitantly. "I'm high where I guess I would be, considering the kind of work I've done." She pointed at her profile. "I'm high on Science, Clerical, and Service and those fit with various parts of nursing." She paused. "You know, I wanted to do Pharmacy when I left High School but my family couldn't afford to send me to University. I guess that interest in Science is still coming through after all these years."

As the discussion continued Stan came back into the classroom. "Well, you ladies certainly know yourselves," he commented. "I've been putting the scores from your preference test on profiles and they're very well defined; there are lots of peaks and valleys."

"That comes with age," Ellen quipped.

Jenny turned to me with a perplexed expression on her face. "I can hardly believe this is me!" she exclaimed.

"Why?"

"I've come out high on Science Professional. I sure didn't expect that!" She read out a number of the job titles from that category.

"Experimental Psychologist. What's that?" she asked Stan.

"Oh, those are the guys who conduct experiments with mazes and rats and all that kind of stuff," he replied.

"Yuck," she shuddered and continued to read from the list. "Surgeon. Oh, Brain Surgeon!" She looked up and laughed. "Might as well go for the top, hey!"

"Right," Stan smiled at her. "Go for it all!"

Just before nine-thirty Stan announced, "For the next two weeks we'll be doing a test called the Differential Aptitude Test. Some people consider this an intelligence test but I don't. It simply measures aptitudes. Be on time because it is timed and everyone has to start together. You can take your Interests Profile home with you this week but bring them back with you next class."

Anne threw down her pencil and collapsed back in her chair.

"And here I've been working so fast to finish it! I've always had trouble with tests," she moaned.

"I'm sure going to have to study this profile some more," Jenny commented as we walked out. "Science Professional?" She shook her head.

Interview with Jenny: November 26

"I just couldn't believe it when everybody else was finishing that Personal Preference test and I still had well over one hundred questions to do!" Jenny exclaimed. "I started thinking alright, let's just start marking them; read 'em and mark 'em. Do you know I just can't bring myself to do that? I have to read and know. And I wanted it to be a really true, accurate picture of me. When I got thinking about it afterwards, I thought that's basically what I do in everything. I never really rush completely into something, I always think about it."

"So, you're fairly cautious?" I asked her.

"I think so," she replied, sipping her coffee.

"Is there a parallel between the way you did that test and the decision about whether to get a paid job outside the home?"

"Yeah. Because it is an important decision, that one. It's something that, when I do make that step, it had better be the right one. On the spur of the moment, because I'm feeling really great about getting out of the home and doing my own thing, I take a job and it isn't good for me, then I'm the loser. Like, I've just wasted a whole bunch of time and I don't like that."

"I think you've said before that it's more than wasting time," I prompted.

"Yes. It's just not fair. For the upheaval it would cause here, for one thing," she agreed, waving her arm to indicate her home. Also, to give somebody your word that yes, you will work for the company and then to hate the job, that wouldn't be fair because it's bound to show up in your work. And if I'm unhappy on the job I'm sure the heck not going to be happy at home, am I?"

She paused and poured another cup of coffee. "You see, I don't have to go to work. I have nobody telling me that I have to go to work. This is my decision if I want to. And I want to do the right thing." She sighed, "I guess I just want the best of both worlds but I wish it could be presented as, Jenny, this is what you should do and it's right. But life isn't like that; I've got to make these decisions myself. And that's part of why I came to the course, hey? I thought at least I'll get some testing out of this; at least I'll have some direction to start in."

She giggled. "Well, the direction has been pointed to me and it's not what I expected. And, to tell you the truth, right now when I look at that profile, at Sciences Professional, I don't believe that. But, then, I've never tried any of that kind of work so maybe it is true. Maybe if I pick out a few things on there more geared to my interests than a Brain Surgeon, maybe it will really pan out."

I said to my husband I can't see training for fifteen years to be a Brain Surgeon and then do one operation before I have to retire." We laughed.

Session Ten: December 18

"I wonder what the counselling session will be like?"

"Did anyone see any of the others this past week?"

Five of us sat waiting for Stan. Two weeks ago, when we had completed the second two-hour session required to complete the Aptitude Test, Stan had asked us to divide ourselves into two groups for the last sessions so that we would have more time to discuss our results. The other five had come the week before but none of us had seen or spoken to them.

"Lord, it's so long since I've done fractions and things like that. And square roots?" Sandra commented about the testing we had completed.

"It was that Space Relations section that I had so much trouble with," Jenny chimed in. "I've always been lousy at math but I figure I can always go and learn how to do that. I'll never be able to change folding that paper though!" She laughed.

I recalled that the Space Relations test had required us to visualize a three-dimensional shape when it was unfolded. "Well, think of it this way," I joked with her, "I'm sure Brain Surgeons don't have to fold paper."

We laughed. "Right," she said. Just give me brains and stuff like that." She became serious. "But, you know, there's a feeling of exhilaration when you come across something that you can do really well or feel that you're doing well but the feeling of not being able to do something - that's an awful feeling."

Stan arrived then and immediately put a puzzle on the board - try to connect all these dots with one continuous line - and asked us to work on it while he got everything organized. About ten minutes later he returned with an armload of books and pamphlets which he laid on the desks at the front of the room.

"So, how did you do with it?" he asked us with a grin and then showed us the solution on the board. "You see it requires you to draw the line outside the square of the dots. The problem is that we assume we have to stay within that square and, unfortunately, this is the way we look at ourselves. We feel uncomfortable viewing ourselves in a different perspective. I hope tonight that you can come to view yourselves in a new perspective."

He passed out the test results to us and began to explain the meaning of each sub-scale on the Personal Preference Schedule and Differential Aptitude Test, including equivalences for the latter with the GATB test. "With these equivalencies you can use the Canadian Dictionary of Occupations," he explained. "And the COPS Profile also uses the same headings as the Dictionary."

"Remember," he cautioned, "don't be discouraged by your results. If you've been out of school for a while this could have an impact. But, with upgrading, your results could change. I'll give you twenty minutes or so to look through some of this information," he said, gesturing at the material he had put out. "Then I'll show you the Career Resource room here in the school which you can also use."

We browsed through the materials he had brought in which described various post-secondary programs and career areas. Ellen and I looked through the Canadian Dictionary of Occupations, trying to decipher the coding system it used to describe the entries. We agreed it would take quite a lot of time to study and use it.

The Career Resource room had files of similar materials. "I just want you to know this is here," Stan said as we looked briefly at the room. "We want the community to use the school so feel free to arrange to come and do some research here."

"It's kind of hard to know where to start, isn't it?" we commented as we returned to the classroom. Stan plugged in the kettle and we made ourselves a hot drink. Jenny and I went to the washroom and, giggling about being "caught," had a cigarette.

"I had to look twice at the name on that Personal Preference Profile," she said. "It just doesn't seem to fit. I didn't think you could alter personality tests by your mood or anything like that. I can't figure it out."

"Why don't you ask him about it?" I suggested.

When we went back into the room she did.

"You don't recognize yourself?" Stan replied. "If that's the case, think of the possibility of a split between what you are and what you want to be."

The others were still looking at their results and the resource material. Sandra flipped through the Apprenticeship Booklet, saying she had been high on mechanical aptitude. "Oh, Appliance Repair," she read out. "I could do that, I already know how to fix most of the appliances in my house," she laughed.

Stan stayed seated at the front of the room occasionally commenting on the brochures we picked up.

"Isn't he going to give us our counselling?" Jenny whispered.

"I thought so," I replied with a shrug.

Sandra looked at us questioningly and then went up to Stan and asked if she could discuss her results with him. He invited her to sit at the desk and they talked for a few minutes.

"I don't really want to talk to him in front of everyone else," Jenny said to me in a low voice.

Ruth and Ellen followed Sandra, each spending a few minutes with him. When Ruth returned to her seat she said with a quizzical expression on her face that he had suggested accounting to her. "I sure would never have thought of that," she commented and continued to study her results.

"Are any of you in a hurry to make some decisions?" Stan asked us.

"No, not really," Ellen replied. "I've got time to do some more research on this."

By this time it was close to 9:30. Stan passed out some evaluation sheets and asked us to complete and mail them to the course sponsors. We stood up, turned our chairs back up on the desk, and put on our coats.

"Well, goodbye."

"Merry Christmas."

"Thanks."

As I walked out one of the custodians approached me. "We'd like you to start using that other entrance," she said, you're tracking up the floors".

"Oh, don't worry," I replied. The class is finished. We won't be back".

4. TRANSLATING POSSIBILITIES INTO ANSWERS

> "I've sort of stayed away from (the vocational counselling approach) because I felt the course was really more of an orientation ... more confidence building, awareness of self ... These tests are supposed to be some approach to be objective but, at the same time, I realize that they're not absolutely foolproof, they're only some representation."
>
> (Stan: 5/2)

> "(Taking a job) is an important decision ... when I do make that step it had better be the right one ... And that's part of why I came to the course. I thought at least I'll get some testing out of this; at least I'll have some direction to start in".
>
> (Jenny: 26/11/)

The testing was what many of the participants had explicitly focused on in electing to come to the course. Even those whose initial focal interest encompassed general discussion about one's self and goals, such as Barbara, still saw the testing as an important part of the self-assessment they expected. The connection between testing and what they were there for seemed clear. They expected that the test results would provide a concrete and accurate indicator of the direction they should take. These results should narrow possibilities.

But for Stan the test results were a "representation" only, not unlike the philosophical and psychological "reflecting devices" he held out to them in the first few sessions. The results could present new possibilities, new insights, help them break through assumptions they held about themselves. The test results could broaden possibilities.

Given their high expectations of the utility of the test results, the participants were inclined to take them seriously. While those who couldn't "see themselves" in the psychological models tended simply to "dismiss them," there was a much more concerted effort to translate the test results into something personally meaningful.

For most of the women there was the belief that the results would present an "accurate picture" of themselves. Thus the results could close off as well as open possibilities and this could be "devastating":

> A: I came out of that class feeling just rock-bottom. It sure as heck didn't boost my morale any.
> Q: What were some of the things that were happening there that gave you that feeling?
> A: Well, number one, the tests. I felt a real dozo on those. He said this should tell you if you get so and so on these tests, it should tell you that maybe if you were thinking of going to university you should maybe take a second look at that and decide that you shouldn't because you're going to find it very difficult. If I read it that way then I would say, O.K., I won't be able to do that. I was just kidding myself that I could go to university and hack it ... All the tests, even that personal preference one, I came out of feeling awful. The only thing I scored high on was heterosexual and spelling. And I thought, jeepers, the only thing I've come out of here with, the only thing I'm fit for, is a hooker - who spells well! I found it really devastating.
> Q: That suggests you're putting a fair amount of weight on these tests. Why is that?
> A: Because it was the first chance I've had to test out since I was at school. This is the very first time since then that I've put myself to the test of saying, O.K., am I as dumb as I think I am? As I've been led to believe over the years? And it kind of proved that I was, you see.
>
> (Anne: 22/1)

The results had to present positive alternatives to be useful but, more than that, they had to be translated into something "realistic." Jenny joked about the inappropriateness of studying to be a Brain Surgeon but her joke revealed some of the qualifications that these women placed on their options.

For those who were at home with young families there was concern expressed about the dual responsibilities of raising a family and pursuing a career. For all of them their age was a consideration. Many felt reluctant to devote much time to training and, if they did, they wanted to be quite sure that they would like that kind of work before they enrolled in a training program. For those who already had a full-time position in the labour force, there was the consideration of financial loss in changing careers. These were the kinds of consideration they weighed in making their decision and, to them, meant "being realistic".

> B: "I feel good about my test results. They've made me aware of my abilities. I've been out of school so long I wasn't sure about the credibility of my education. I'm glad that I could still carry on with my education, if I wanted to. But I'm also aware that age is an important factor in a second career choice. I think that age is something that should have been taken into account in the course ... I guess I always thought that when I got to this point I'd go after things that I'd put off for whatever reason. But now I have more realistically considered my options and what I want out of life".
>
> (Barbara: 12/3)

> S: "Some of the results were fairly confusing. I was high on mechanical aptitude but when you read down the list of related jobs, you think, I don't want to do that so why should I be high if they don't appeal to me? When I talked to him about it he said to lump together everything I was high on - the mechanical, business professional, and the artistic. He suggested

> architecture ... Everything he said, of course, is true but here I am: a 32 year old mother of two kids. There's no way I'm going to take a four year architecture course in Manitoba ... But I am planning on going to talk to the community college about their interior design and display courses."
>
> (Sandra: 19/1)

It was one thing to break through assumptions they held about themselves, as Stan challenged them to do. It was another to make "realistic" choices.

And, finally, even assuming your results were positive and presented something realistic to you, there was the further requirement, on the part of at least some, that you could translate all of this information into some kind of plan of action. This was what was expected of the final, counselling session but when it didn't happen, they felt they had been "left in the air" or "left in limbo":

> R: "I was under the impression that the final night there would be a certain amount of counselling on an individual basis. I felt that we were sort of left on our own more or less to sum it up. He had scored the sheets and when we went up and asked him something specific he did elaborate on it. But I was just under the impression that the whole package would sort of be gone over on an individual basis and we would get a bit more direction, a bit more counselling ... I sort of felt left up in the air."
>
> (Ruth: 19/1)

> J: "I was really upset the very last night when we got the tests back and were supposed to have the conference with him. It was so rushed. We had just received the results. How could we come up with any conclusions in such a short time? And for me, he didn't suggest any

places, any possibilities."
Q: "In terms of other jobs?"
J: "Where to go now? What's the next step? This is what I'd hoped for; maybe not have all the answers but at least some direction. How do you go from here to here? So I'm still in much limbo right now."

(Janet: 26/1)

As Jenny was later to ruefully reflect, she had entered the course thinking that the testing would be "the magic thing that was going to point me right in one direction". But there was no magic in the testing after all; for many they provided no clear indication of a direction to start in.

Interview with Jenny: February 3

Jenny and I sat down together in her dining room for the last time in early February. Our meeting had been postponed several weeks because of the death of her father. We talked at some length about that before we turned to the Transitions course.

"I'd like to briefly review the course with you," I explained, "and see if you can think back to what you were thinking about or feeling at that time."

"Sure, let's try," she agreed.

"The first session ..."

"That's probably the only one I do remember well," she broke in.

"Oh, really? Why does that one stand out in your mind?"

"Because for the very first part of the session, I found that it was kind of a high for me. I thought, gee, look at all these ladies who don't know what they want to do with themselves. It's nice to know there are other people like yourself."

"Anything else about the first session?"

"It got pretty heavy there for a while, remember? Towards the end he was just talking and talking. I found it boring and I didn't understand a lot of it or his terminology. You see, I thought there would be a lot more personal involvement, we would talk more as people to each other and to him. Not him stand and lecture. And that's basically what I recall of the next couple of weeks as being like that."

"The second session was the one where he presented that model in some detail," I reminded her.

"Yeah, and that just irked me."

"Irked you because?"

"I think I had put him in a position that he was supposed to know what he was talking about, O.K.? Then I think I started to see him telling me something that I wanted to question and I couldn't question. I did try. I felt that we should have been able to discuss things because that's how you learn hey? Asking questions, discussing your views, having your views changed - that's how you learn. It almost put me to the point where I wondered if I wanted to pursue something along the lines of a classroom situation like that."

"Was this the first time you've gone into a classroom, as such, since you left high school?"

"Yeah. I've taken other things like typing or crocheting, but those things are cut and dried. You don't have to question why is the letter A there on the keyboard. But when you get into something like this it's not cut and dried. When Stan would say something and inside of me I disagreed with him I'd get angry because I didn't feel I could express my viewpoint. But I also started realizing that just because he's standing there and is supposed to be the authority because he is up there, that my viewpoint is every bit as important to me as his viewpoint. Like, I am just as smart at coming to a conclusion as he is and when it's dealing with me I'm probably smarter. So that's when I decided that I wasn't going to take everything he said as gospel."

"And when you say gospel, you mean?"

"The truth."

"And that's what you meant when you said that third night that you weren't going to take everything so seriously?"

"Yes. That I would weed things out a bit and hear his views but that I could have my own views which might be different - even if we didn't discuss them."

"What about the lost-on-the-moon sessions. Any comments?"

"Yeah. That was fun. That's exactly how I looked at it. Isn't this a nice break from him standing there talking."

"You missed the second night where we gave each other feedback."

"That would have been interesting. I could have seen how you related to Marie and I did and things like. That's interesting; I like that."

"That was also the night when we did that exercise with our characteristics. When I told you about it you said you couldn't see the point of that."

"No, I still don't. In my particular case I didn't have to have my characteristics clarified. When I went through that period in my life a few years back when I felt so low and really analyzed myself, I looked at all my traits - physical, mental, the whole bit. I had basically come to grips with what I was all about so therefore, I didn't see the purpose of that."

"So whereas at that time in your life you did analyze yourself and your feelings, at this time you didn't feel you needed this kind of exercise?"

"Right. I needed to then. I don't now. I don't think I took any of this course as something I needed."

"Except the testing, maybe."

"The testing was what I wanted. I thought maybe it would show me something. But leading up to that I didn't need any of it."

"So, you had a fairly specific focus, you thought the testing would show you something?"

"Yeah, actually I thought that that was going to be the magic thing that was going to point me right in one direction - there you go, Jenny, there's your decision." She laughed. "Remember, I told you a long time ago that I had the course built up in my mind to be entirely different that what it was? Well, I was wrong."

"So have the tests showed you anything?"

"Well, I haven't reached a decision on anything. I guess the only thing which sort of comes to mind is that, if I wanted to do one particular kind of course, I would have to look back at my test results and see how I scored. If it was an English course, I scored high on that end of it and maybe I could go right into it. But if I wanted something that involved math I'd have to say to myself, gee, I'm going to have to take a lot of math upgrading first."

"So they've given you some information?"

"Yeah, I don't know what my decision would be, what I'm going to go into, but I would know, at least, to go over to that reference library at the school one day and read that literature."

"If you look back at the course now, how would you describe the kind of experience it was for you."

"I don't know. I guess I'd just have to say it was something to do. Like it was something I at least tried; maybe I made a first step into something and maybe learned a little bit. Whether I benefitted from it, I don't know. Maybe a little bit."

"I wonder how many will make a change after this course?" she mused as I prepared to leave. "I think everybody there was basically thinking of some kind of change in their life and just didn't know where even to begin or didn't know what they wanted to do and maybe the course would ...." Her voice trailed off and then she giggled.

"Well, I saw Sandra the other day at the racquetball courts and we talked about the course. I said, yeah, I've decided I'm going to be a housewife. And we just laughed."

5. A QUESTION OF DEFINITION

> "I walk in to the class with the package that I have prepared with the three dimensions of self, relations with others, and the worker. I come in, I guess with some kind of assumption that I would carry on in that way ... The idea is that I would like to think I'm staying flexible but I find that sometimes I'm not gaining a very defined need. They're telling me a lot of things and when I sort of look at that then I say what they're really saying is what I've got. So I just carry out what I have. Then at the end they say great, exactly what I wanted *or* gee, too bad we didn't have more of this ... In a sense you try to walk that middle line."
>
> (Stan: 5/2)

> "I don't think I took any of this course as something I needed ... The testing was what I *wanted*. But leading up to that I didn't *need* any of it."
>
> (Jenny: 3/2)

In packaging the Transitions course Stan had built a curriculum around an abstract, idealized person who, experiencing some disturbance in her life, needed to develop a new understanding of herself and the situation she was in. From that centre the curriculum unfolded in a "proper, sequential order."

When he walked into the classroom with that package, he felt that he was safe to assume that he had what they "really needed." Whether the participants were aware of it or not, were able to define it or not, they were there because they were experiencing disturbance. Why else would they be there? And, therefore, his analysis of their situation and the prescription of need that arose from it was justified. All that was required from the participants was to identify themselves with that abstract person at the centre of his curriculum. From that central perspective the activities would cohere.

But the nine participants had come into the course with their own understanding of their situation and, arising out of that, an expectation of how the course fit within it. It was from this centre that they interpreted the flow of activities which made up the Transitions curriculum: How does this fit me? How does this help me find direction?

It is suggested that what characterized the Transitions course experience was the underlying tension created by the existence of these differently centred interpretive perspectives: the entering perspective of the women, centred in their own self-definition of their situation and the prepared curriculum's perspective, centred in the instructor's definition of what their situation "really" was.

The nature of the instructional process was such that the participants had to either adopt the perspective willingly, or, failing that, were left "outside" the process, interpreting activities from a different vantage point. From the outsider's vantage point, much of the activity appeared random and pointless. Bridging the gap between them required an act of translation which frequently distorted the integrity and meaning of the original message.

Stan proceeded on the assumption that, if the participants didn't already identify themselves as being in need of self-awareness, the need would become obvious in the presentation of his content.

Implicit in his approach were notions of student role and instructional authority which reinforced this assumption.

Those few who coincidentally defined themselves as needing self-awareness could become immediately engaged in the classroom activity. Barbara was a good example of this. She came into the course articulating her needs to be those of "reassessment of life goals, an opportunity for self-awareness." The philosophical and psychological models helped her focus her thinking in a way which she both expected and wanted. She could immediately centre herself within the activity.

Marie was the other who was most engaged in the first sessions, actively questioning and commenting on his lectures, enjoying "using her head." She had come to the course with diffuse expectations and an assumption that someone teaching a course would "know what he was talking about." For her, the first sessions were "like psychotherapy," where she tested her perceptions against the body of knowledge he presented. "I just think he's helping me ... he sort of makes you feel that you're normal, kind of confirms some of the things you think may be true but you're not sure."

Marie's acknowledgement of Stan's instructional role and authority was an implicit requirement in accepting the defined curriculum. The package he had created structured the learning process in a deductive manner. It started with the presentation of generalized, academic models and moved toward a more individualized, but still representational, career profile. His role throughout was to lead and structure this process; his authority was that of the academic expert, the neutral observer, the test administrator. He was there to teach, they were there to learn. It was a one-way relationship.

The initial lecture format, the language of the presentation, his intermittent apologies for being "academic," and his queries about whether he was yet "over their heads" consistently reinforced the expert, teaching role. In so doing he placed the participants in a student role and tacitly required them to acquiesce to his definition of their need.

Jenny's agitation after the first two session - she walked home "cussing all the way" - revealed the feelings engendered by that tacit request to suspend one's own definitions in favour of his.

Not defining herself in need of self-assessment, expecting that she would get answers from the course - not more questions - she was bewildered by and resentful of his actions. It didn't seem to her that he was trying to broaden her understanding, it seemed to her that he was trying to impose his. She saw him presenting "the truth," forcing a single answer, couched in jargon, on her.

The measure of the gap between them was evident in their mutual misunderstanding in the second session over the assignment to use the "Power Cycle" model.

Stan intended the model as a tool for self-analysis. But Jenny, seeing no need for self-analysis, assumed that his intention was to find out more about her so "he could assist her." The potentially embarrassing misuse of his language and the obfuscation of trying to express one's self in alien terminology were her concerns. She felt put on the spot, a student who would "look stupid."

Stan's concern, however, was that he might appear to be overstepping the boundary of a legitimate request from an instructor. He feared that she saw him "prying into her personal life." This, he stressed, was not his intention. That kind of self-disclosure was not part of the inherently intellectual process he offered.

The sense of imposition Jenny felt was shared by others whose entering definitions of self were similarly distanced from that abstract person that Stan's curriculum was designed to serve. Few others became as "irked" as Jenny who resented the implication that she had some deficiency that she was unaware of. But these others shared her sense that "this isn't what I'm there for."

The more the distance between definitions of self and needs, the more the distance between the participants and the activities. This distance was simply exacerbated by the academic nature of the first sessions. You didn't "see yourself" in the models, it "didn't pertain to you," it was "useless philosophizing," it didn't "help you."

When the academic format was relaxed the participants similarly relaxed and enjoyed getting to know each other. Some questioned the point of the exercises but the majority simply went along with them, content to bide their time until the testing began.

When the testing began the distance was temporarily abridged by the assumed value of the activity itself. It was not until the last session, with the test results in hand, that the discrepant assumptions and intentions became evident again. For Stan the testing was provided on the assumption that people needed to see a new set of possibilities which would allow them to further elaborate their options, give them a new way of seeing themselves. But for the participants the testing results were assumed to be a means of narrowing and defining direction. Once again, assumptions about needs were discrepant and distanced.

Different assumptions, discrepant definitions of need, divergent intentions, dissimilarity in goals: all these marked the distance between the perspectives in the Transitions classroom

Stan described himself as "walking the middle line" but the reality of the experience from the participants' viewpoint was that it was they who were forced to walk the prescribed middle line.

For some the journey along that middle line moved them closer to a sense of direction. For others it resulted in a sense of being left in limbo or being stranded back at the beginning, still directionless:

> Q: "How would you describe the kind of experience it was for you to take this course?"
> S: "It was a very beneficial experience ... It's like before I had a paper bag on my head and just couldn't see where to go. Now that paper bag is off and I can see which way I'm going".
>
> (Sandra: 19/1)

Q: "How would you describe the kind of experience it was for you to take this course?"

C: "It wasn't a very profitable experience ... Really, it was quite disappointing. I'm exactly at the same spot right now where I was in September".

(Carol: 19/1)

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

1. SUMMARY

This study originated from an interest in examining the kind of adult education programming defined as the "situation-approach" by Eduard Lindeman (1961) which links educational endeavour directly to the various life situations in which adults find themselves. The specific research purpose was to describe, from the participants' point of view, the experience of adult learners in such an educational program.

One such situation-approach program was selected: a non-credit, evening program designed for women who were considering some kind of life change by either returning for further education, re-entering the labour force, or changing careers.

This case study was proposed as a contribution to that research in adult education which, using qualitative research techniques, focuses on the education process from the point of view of the adult learner.

The study was based on some five months of field research using techniques of participant-observation and in-depth interviews with the nine participants and course instructor. The strategies employed in this research were guided by the work of such qualitative researchers as Schatzman and Strauss, (1973) Becker et al (1961, 1968) and Spradley. (1980)

The voluminous data accumulated were subjected to a variety of analytic operations, principally that of searching for common categories to reveal patterns of participant interpretation of their experience. This data analysis was an interactive process between the researcher and the data, a process which had as its objective the distillation and organization of the raw data into a form which could be presented to the reader.

The concept of "perspective," defined by Becker et al as "a coordinated set of ideas and actions a person uses in dealing with some problematic situation," (1968:5) became a key substantive lever for analysis. It provided an analytic framework for the comparative analysis of the participants' and instructor's viewpoints and the differences in their intentions and actions in the classroom and led to an articulation of the major descriptive theme: an encounter of perspectives.

This theme was used to order the description of the participants' experience with data being presented to illustrate its subthemes. A sense of the narrative flow of the experience was provided through a chronological account of the class sessions and the interviews held with the one participant interviewed most frequently and regularly.

It was suggested that the participants' experience in this particular program can be characterized as an encounter of discrepant perspectives -- the personal, pragmatic perspective of the participants encountering the abstract, academic perspective of the instructor embodied in the course curriculum.

The nine participants entered the classroom with the primary goal of "finding direction." They expected the course to be instrumental in that search by providing a set of immediately relevant and practical activities by which decisions could be made.

The curriculm activities they encountered, however, were selected by the instructor to address a different primary goal, the stimulation of greater awareness. The activities were designed to raise questions, encourage speculation and provide new insights into their present situation.

These divergent goals rested on different assumptions about how the participants defined their situation and needs; assumptions which were never wholly surfaced in the classroom nor resolved. Since the instructor had "pre-packaged" the curriculum on his own assumptions, the participants had either to adopt its central perspective willingly or, failing that, were left to render meaning from a different interpretive perspective. The more distance between definitions of self and needs, the more the distance between the participants and the activities. Bridging the gap between them required an act of translation which frequently distorted the integrity and meaning of the original message.

The "academic" nature of the first few sessions created an initial distancing for the majority of the participants. The formal stance of lecturing the instructor employed, the abstruseness of his language, and the passivity and discomfort of the student role all reinforced this distancing. It was defined as "being in the classroom," a realm which seemed considerably removed from their everyday world. The purpose of reflecting upon one's self through the medium of philosophical and psychological models was "helpful" only to those few in the class who defined themselves as needing self-awareness. For the others the activity remained opaque or confusing or was simply rejected as "irrelevant" to "what I'm there for."

The didactic nature of the instructional process underlined an essential difference in the approach the instructor took and that which the participants expected. From the instructor's perspective, the role he had in the classroom was one of structuring and leading students through an intellectual self-examination. From the participants' perspective, they expected and valued a more personal engagement both with him and with the group as a whole. They did not define themselves so much as students needing to learn new ideas as individuals who were looking for "help" from each other and, most specifically, from him.

The help they most clearly expected lay in the results of the test battery. These were assumed to provide "concrete" information which would focus their possibilities into a more clearly defined direction. But for the instructor the test results were a "representation" only which, if anything, could help them break through restrictive assumptions they held about themselves; could broaden their possibilities. The participants were left trying to translate possibilities into "realistic" options which took into account such factors as their age and family responsibilities.

In the end the participants summarized the experience largely on the basis of its practical outcomes. From this pragmatic perspective the experience was either "beneficial" or "not very profitable" depending on whether they defined themselves at its end as being closer to "finding direction."

For the instructor this variety of judgments was almost inevitable, he was "realistic" about this -- "I know that I can't satisfy everybody and everybody has their own kind of orientation." Faced with these multiple orientations and ill defined needs, he proceeded with his "package;" he tried "to walk that middle line."

But the reality of the experience, from the participants' point of view, was that they were forced to walk the middle line of a curriculum which imposed different definitions of need and relevance.

Different assumptions, discrepant definitions of need, divergent intentions, dissimilarity in goals: all these marked the distance between the perspectives of the participants and the instructor as they encountered each other in the classroom.

2. IMPLICATIONS

The situation-approach to adult education rests on the assumption that it is needs and interests arising out of life situations which motivate adults to engage in learning. Building the learning process around these needs and interests, making life experiences the heart of the curriculum, the learning will be "given a setting of reality." It will be relevant to the adult. Yet this case study of a situation-approach program has suggested that the needs and interests arising out of life situations are subjective in nature. External assessments of needs, as made by the instructor in this case, did not sufficiently accord with the participants' subjective definitions to provide a shared basis of understanding and action in the learning. Furthermore, the very structure imposed on the learning process may foster distinctions and distance from the everyday reality of the participant. Distanced from their sphere of interests, the learning process is experienced as less relevant by the participants.

This single case study can do no more than serve as an illustration of the situation-approach to adult education programming. Nonetheless, it is suggested that it well illustrates two, key theoretical and practical issues confronting adult educators who attempt to implement such a program design strategy as Lindeman advocated: How can the concept of needs serve as a basis for program design? What is the role of the instructor in structuring the learning process? Each of these will be briefly discussed with reference to this case study.

The concept of needs

"Meeting the needs of the learners" is one of the most import-and and pervasive tenets in adult education. The ubiquity of this concept of needs can be largely attributed to the profound influence of John Dewey's educational philosophy on adult education's theory and methodology. (Houle, 1972:10-13) Indeed, Lindeman's The Meaning of Adult Education was a contemporary interpretation of Dewey's theories for adult education with its call for a situation-approach based on the adult's needs and interests.

Yet, as Archambault has pointed out, Dewey never clarified the concept of need in his writings nor elaborated its implications. It remained vague in meaning but widely adopted, often only "with limited connection with the total Dewey scheme." (1957:39)

Monette's recent review of the concept (1977) as it is used in adult education has reaffirmed Archambault's point that the term "need" suffers from a lack of conceptual clarity. It may be used in widely varying and often undifferentiated ways from reference to the individual's "wants" or "felt-needs" to an observer's assessment of deficiency or "real needs" to its use as a slogan.

The latter use of the term, needs as a slogan, Monette suggests may serve useful emotive or public relations functions, but it must be differentiated from its use as an approach to program development which requires a more rigorous definition. (1977:125) He suggests that the term be more narrowly defined "either from the point of view of the individual learner, as a desire/want/interest or from an external perspective, as an objectively determined deficiency in knowledge, skills, or attitudes." (123)

However, even with this differentiation made in the use of the term, there still remains the issue of which can be used as a basis for program planning.

The prescription of needs by the educator rests inevitably on some normative standard against which the individual's deficiency is assessed. This value judgment regarding an individual's "real needs" may "constitute an imposition of the educator's world view upon the learner" and, to that extent, deny "the freedom and self-determination of the individual." (Monette, 1977:124) As Monette, points out, the ethos of adult education is such that this imposition of values on others is considered to be contrary to its respect for the learner to determine the nature of his participation in learning.

On the other hand, the use of the individual's "felt-needs" as a basis for program planning - which would appear to have been Lindeman's use of the term - has several inherent difficulties. These felt-needs, too, represent value decisions, specifying goals the individual "wants" to pursue. Will any felt-need be acceptable as a basis for program decisions? How does the educator weigh the merits of these and choose among them? More crucially, what is the educator's responsibility for providing leadership in the educational process?

The felt-needs the learners express may represent a starting point, but, even if those are accepted without question, the educator must still make decisions, influence and guide the learning process. To suggest that the felt-needs approach obviates value decisions on the part of the educator is quite incorrect, in Monette's view. "The felt-needs approach...is, in the last analysis, insufficient for determining and justifying the kind of intervention which is appropriate for the educator in program planning." (1979:89)

The dialogue between learners and the educator, the educator's requirement to be accountable for his mode of intervention in guiding learners, is what Monette concludes is necessary in adult education programs which try to emulate the situation-approach of needs-based learning. Recognizing that needs are not "mere empirically determinable facts" but "complex value judgments," educators must be critically aware of the values inherent in the educational process. (1979:84) Neither the perspective of the learners nor that of the instructor should be "absolutized" but should be open to question and examination. The educator's aims, his modes of influence, his notions of the worthwhile all must be made explicit and open for critique. (90)

In light of this discussion, how might what happened in the Transitions classroom be understood? We have seen that the instructor clearly fulfilled what he considered to be his leadership role. He justified his curriculum approach on the basis of his expert knowledge and his prior experience with other learners. The needs expressed by the learners were "ill defined" and, he felt, were "really" what he prescribed. He defined their need as one of "self-awareness" and set about to address that deficiency.

Yet, from the point of view of many of the participants, his prescription of their needs was considerably at odds with their felt-needs and several were affronted by the implication that he know better than they what they needed. He was imposing his view on them, using his instructor's role as simple justification for that.

What was missing from this classroom was any dialogue about the definitions of need. The instructor never clarified his assumptions or allowed for critical reflection upon, and further articulation of, the participants' expressed needs. Nor were the instructor-student roles he imposed ever questioned. The instructor clearly operated on the assumption that his relationship with them rested on the superior knowledge he would transmit to them and, further, that the presumed value of this knowledge was self-evident solely because he was the instructor.

The consequences of this lack of dialogue can be, as we have seen in this case study, a learning experience which neither engages nor satisfies the participants. And, even more critically in the mind of this writer, it continues to promote the notion that adult learning is dependent on a one-way transmission of knowledge. In situation-approach programming, a very different conception of the instructor's role is necessary than that of the purveyor of knowledge.

The role of the instructor

The underlying epistemological position in the situation-approach is pragmatic in nature. In the pragmatic view knowledge is that which arises from active inquiry, provoked by problems and directed at the resolution of these problems. In the pragmatic view, "the ideal education is one that connects general ideas with real problems and that stresses their practical bearing." (Scheffler, 1965:5) It is a personal discovery of meaning which the situation approach emphasizes.

Given this notion of knowledge as personal meaning, Lindeman noted that such education required new types of teachers whose role was not that of subject matter specialist or "oracle" supplying the answers. Rather, the educator's "function is not to profess but to evoke - to draw out, not pour in." (1961: 119) The situation-approach was learner-centred and this cast the role of the instructor differently than that required by the "subject-matter-centred" approach.

This distinction in instructional role between learner and subject centred approaches is today frequently described by adult educators as the distinction between "andragogy" and "pedagogy." The term "andragogy," is most closely associated with Malcolm Knowles whose view of adult education closely corresponds with the Dewey-Lindeman notions. Andragogy, is defined by Knowles as "the art and science of helping adults learn" and is based on what are seen to be some crucial differences between adults and children which will influence the learning process: the adults' developed self-concept, reservoirs of life experience, elaborated social roles, and time perspective. (1970:37-55)

Andragogical principles and the corresponding instructional techniques have been well described not only by Knowles but by others such as Brundage. (1980) In general terms these are techniques which will effectively engage the adult learner in the very planning and selection of the learning goals and activities. It is an instructional role which shifts the balance of power and control over the learning away from the instructor and toward a shared responsibility with the learner.

These andragogical techniques were not in evidence in the Transitions classroom where the instructor emphasized his own control and de-emphasized the mutuality of the exchange between the participants and with himself. To the participants the learning process was "impersonal" and "intellectual." The instructor's pre-packaging of the curriculum not only precluded a dialogue about needs, it precluded any involvement by the participants in directing their own learning. They were left in a passive position, their choices narrowed to either accepting or rejecting the inquiry process he prescribed. It became, very substantially, a closed proposition subject to an externally controlled script.

The consequences of this instructor's control and the role he chose to play was to substantially impair the participants' learning by making the experience distanced and passive. But the crucial issue is less one of technique than of the values such a mode of instruction reinforces.

Underlying the andragogical techniques is a clear value position that proposes an equality and mutuality between instructor and learners which acknowledges and respects the adults' life experience and perspectives. Just as perspectives about needs cannot be absolutized and should be a matter of dialogue, so must perspectives about the meaning and goals of the learning become a matter of dialogue between the instructor and learners.

As Bates concluded in her study of the learning experience in a learner-centred program: "Primary emphasis must be placed on the values and philosophy of the facilitator. Strategies and techniques are likely to be effective only if a facilitator places a value on the person, and the meanings that she or he makes in a given situation." (1979:280)

The foregoing discussion has suggested that the Transitions classroom experience departed from the requirements of situation-approach programming in two important respects: in the way in which "needs" were defined and used as a basis for the curriculum and in the nature of the instructional process. The situation-approach is a complex programming strategy which requires clarification of the concepts we use and the educational values we bring to it.

The contribution of this research was intended, in Darkenwald's words, to add to our systematic knowledge of "what is actually going on in adult education programs." (1980:69) In this respect the overall implication of this case study is to suggest to both program planners and instructors that the participant in adult education programs may view the learning situation in very different ways than what the professionals intend. If we wish to facilitate their learning it is imperative that we better understand and respect the perspectives adults bring to the learning experience.

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APPENDIX A

Samples of Condensed, Expanded and Journal Field Notes

Samples of Condensed, Expanded, and Journal Field Notes

Condensed Notes
16/10 Observation
p.1

[conversation prior to class - reconstructed afterwards]

J__________ quit Oct. 1st; was working part-time. Decided she had to take that step. If she stayed working maybe nothing would happen; she wouldn't take that step to change. Well, maybe I won't change anyway.

Expanded Notes
Observation
16/10
p.4 (lines 9-18) p.5 (1-8)

The others began to come in one at a time then. I approached each one about allowing me to phone them outside class and each one showed no hesitation about that, responding, "Oh, sure" or "That would be fine" and giving me their number.

J_______ said she would be home most of the time. I expressed surprise thinking she was working. She explained she quit her job Oct. 1st. She had been working part-time, supposedly only 2 days a week although with the shortage of nurses it was hard to keep it to that level. "I decided I had to take that step, to quit. If I didn't I might never make a change. Well, maybe I won't change anyway, but if I stayed working maybe nothing will happen."

Journal entry
17/10
p.3-4

I had been very nervous about approaching the other to ask for their phone numbers yet had made the decision that I couldn't let another week go by. I found myself (again) tied up by the idea of "how a researcher should do this" but when I began to think of how "I" would do this and got in touch with my own confidence about approaching people I felt more relaxed about it .... So the recurring theme about how to learn the role of "researcher".

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions: Second Round of Participant Interviews

Interview Questions: Second Round of Participant Interviews

1. Review my perception of their definition of situation at the time the course started and how enrolling in the course "fitted in" to this. (attempt to verify my perception, revise inaccuracies, fill in any gaps in my understanding.)

2. Review their interpretations of course sessions as given in first interview; then take them through course activities from that interview to last session. (probe here for recall of events, significance attributed to any of them.)

3. Did you do the "model" assignment? If so, how did you find it? If not, why not?

4. What do you think about your test results?

5. Did you have the opportunity to discuss your test results with the instructor? Did you take that opportunity? How was that?

6. In the time since the class ended have you done any thinking or taken any action, in terms of your initial reasons for taking the course?

7. Where do you "feel you're at" at this point in time?

8. Look back at the course now, could you describe what kind of an experience it was for you to take this course?

9. Do you feel that you have learned anything from the course? How would you describe that?

10. What were the highlights of the course, if any, for you?

11. Is there any aspect of the course that you would change? If so, how and why?

12. What is your opinion of having a male instructor in a course designed for women? Do you think that having a female instructor would alter the course in any way? How?

13. In your view what does the term "taking a second look" mean? Is that what you had intended to do when you enrolled in the course? Did the course facilitate that?

14. How would you describe the course to someone who was not familiar with it?

15. Do you think that these interviews with me have had any effect on your own experience in the course. If so, how?

APPENDIX C

Examples of Data Analysis

SAMPLE OF INITIAL CODING CATEGORIES

I DEFINITION OF SITUATION

A. Goals

1. Urgency
2. Specificity

B. Expectations of course

II PARTICIPANT INTERPRETATION OF EVENTS

A. by format

1. lectures
2. discussions
3. tests

B. by content

1. "academic"
2. "everyday"

C. by result

1. "helpful"
2. "not helpful"

D. by expectation

E. by degree of comfort

F. by personal involvement

G. by definition of need

H. by personal meaning

Sample of Taxonomy of Participant Categorization of Class Events (Sandra)

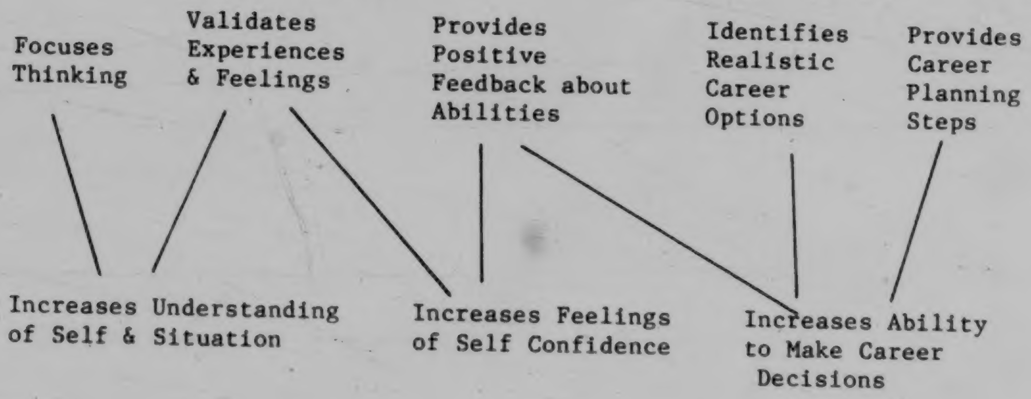
"Psychology" (sessions 1 & 2)	like being a student nervous - just sat there	academic like university	not what I expected not why I was there	dismissed it - not helpful
"Comfortable Part" (sessions 3, 4, 5)	just talking to each other "relaxed" participated	everyday		enjoyed it
"Counselling" (sessions 6 - 10)	participated		what I expected why I was there	helpful got more out of it gave direction
Basic Categories	**Feelings of comfort**	**Kinds of ideas**	**Expectations**	**Personal meaning**
	DIMENSIONS OF CONTRAST			

Instructor and Participant

Categorization of Class Session

Instructor's Categorization	Session Number	**Participants' Categorization**	
By Purpose		**By Format**	**By Content**
The Self as Individual	1	Lectures	Psychology
	2		
	3	Group Discussion Exercises	
The Self in Relationships	4		Leadership Thing/Consensus Stuff
	5		
The Self as Worker	6	Testing Results	Testing Results
	7		
	8		
	9 & 10		

SAMPLE TAXONOMY: ATTRIBUTES OF "HELPFUL"


Focuses Thinking
Validates Experiences & Feelings
Provides Positive Feedback about Abilities
Identifies Realistic Career Options
Provides Career Planning Steps
Increases Understanding of Self & Situation
Increases Feelings of Self Confidence
Increases Ability to Make Career Decisions

SAMPLES OF THEORETICAL NOTES

Journal Entry
Jan. 11

I find when I talk with each of them their responses to the course in terms of the things they volunteer about the sessions, the specific exercises or points they recall and the interpretation they put on them has a connection with this initial expectation. It's as though they spotlight what speaks most directly to them or, as in the case of Carol, don't spotlight anything at all because she doesn't find it relevant to her. (Although she's still reacting to "non-relevance.")

Question: Can I systematically find evidence of this process of selective focusing?

Journal Entry
Feb. 13

This morning I've been looking over the transcripts of Jenny's interviews and something keeps coming through which juxtaposes what is in Stan's interview.

Stan sees himself as "stimulating awareness" among the participants. The models are to act as "mirrors," to provide a way to see yourself. His presentation and his "sweeping generalizations" are to stimulate discussion - he "throws around a few peppers to flavour the soup."

It seems to me that Jenny found this scary, not stimulating.

She goes to the course and she expects that someone there will show her how to arrive at a decision she is having trouble with (do I go out to work or not?) There is this man standing up at the front of the classroom, drawing models on the board, and lecturing to her. She doesn't experience this as "stimulating" she experiences this a prescriptive. He's trying to tell her a certain way to handle things and not only does she not actually agree with him she's having a hell of a time understanding what he's saying. He's "operating in a different vocabulary."

So what is going on there that she experiences his presentation in this way? First, I think, is her assumption that he means to give her answers. Second, there's something going on there about his manner of presentation .....

Journal Entry
April 15

Some attempt to get things to fall together ....

[The participants] come into the class with certain defined expectations of what they want. They are very goal-directed; the course is perceived as instrumental in achieving some future state of affairs.....

Throughout the course period there is this ongoing definition of relevance, i.e., what is instrumental to them. The definition of that is chiefly determined by how it relates to what they feel they want, what is helpful to their decision about finding direction.

I think I can consider entitling this whole process as one of "Seeking Direction."

Journal Entry
May 13

The major point I want to make in terms of eliciting the scene in that classroom is this:
Where perspectives vary so do interpretations of the scene.

When a course is packaged it embodies a certain perspective. From that perspective elements of the scene are defined and action is prescribed. When the participants enter the course their own perspective may be at variance and from that perspective the events in the classroom do not make sense in the same way, do not hold the same meaning.

Perspective is the way by which the elements of a situation are given meaning, made some sense of. If I want to describe the meaning that this course had for the participants I have to describe the perspective they bring into it. I have done this. The next "layer" of interpretation/description/discussion is to show how the perspectives varied.